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THE RUSSIAN PEASANT AND THE REVOLUTION

BY
MAURICE G. HINDUS

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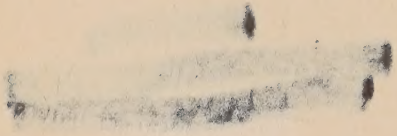

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TO MY MOTHER

WHO HAS KEPT FRESH IN ME
THE MEMORIES OF VILLAGE LIFE IN RUSSIA

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PREFACE

The Russian Revolution came at the wrong hour. It should have come before or after the war, but not in the midst of it. While the war lasted, we were so passionately engrossed in it, that we were not prepared to tolerate anything that was likely to interfere with our military success. That was quite natural. The war loomed as the biggest thing in our life. We felt that everything we respected, loved and enjoyed would be annihilated, unless we smashed the threatening force. As long, therefore, as the Russian Revolution appeared to us to be a gain for our cause,—as it had in the early days, when we imagined that it was essentially a revolt against the pro-Germain oligarchy—we sang hymns of praise to it. But when it became apparent that the Revolution was much more than that, that it was a rebellion against the entire social order which the old régime had reared, and that instead of strengthening, it had actually weakened Russia's military power, we grew suspicious and wroth. And as time progressed, and the internal ferment in Russia increased, and further sapped her military strength, until it became clearly evident that she could no longer contribute sub-

stantially, if at all, to the fighting capacity of the Allies, many of us grew frantic with rage and denounced her as a traitor and coward. In other words, because the Russian Revolution came at a time when we felt that our highest interests were at stake, virtually all of us judged Russia not only in the light of our own past, our own environment, our own conceptions, but in terms of our own immediate needs. Our interpretation of Russia was subjective, and that was an unfortunate approach to the Revolution, unfortunate for us and still more for Russia.

Many of us in our indignation with the capers of the Revolution, have visited our wrath upon the leaders of the movement, and have blamed them for the mishaps that have befallen the once mighty empire. Such an attitude, however sincere, will not advance our understanding, nor enlarge our appreciation of the problem in Russia to-day. Leaders, of course, have their failings. Yet it cannot be too often nor too vigorously emphasized that the cause of Russia's calamities lies rooted, not purely in the stupidity or villainy of individuals, but fundamentally in the infirmities, which centuries of despotism have wrought in the social and economic organization of the country. Is it Bolshevism that wrecked Russia? Or is it wrecked Russia that created Bolshevism? If we wish to understand the spirit of rebellion that has seized the Russian masses, if we

desire to help discipline the outburst of riotous passion and convert it into constructive beneficent action, we must first search for its real cause, partly in the whims and perversities of outstanding leaders, but fundamentally in the actual life of the people, in their warped and vitiated historical development. During a Revolution, when laws and institution, and rights are in a fluid state, it is the basic forces propelling the movement that count; it is the masses of liberated, impassioned, floundering, humanity who invest the Revolution with character and power. "It should be the aim," said Spinoza, "of a wise man neither to mock, nor to bewail, nor to denounce men's actions, but to understand them." It should be our aim to understand the causes and motives of the actions of the Russian masses, for only through such understanding shall we put ourselves in a position to aid them.

Of all the elements that make up the Russian masses, the peasant is by far the most important. Actually and potentially the peasant is the mightiest force in Russian life and, therefore, in the Russian Revolution, and bids fair to become the supreme power in the future of the nation. He constitutes the vast bulk of the population, about eighty per cent of the total. The soldier and the proletariat, though propelled in their revolutionary crusade by motives largely grown out of their particular social environ-

ment, have, nevertheless, very much in common with the *mouzhik* in the struggle for self-assertiveness. Most of the soldiers are peasants, and they are as vitally interested in peasant reforms, especially in the distribution of the land, as are their folks at home. And nearly all of the proletariat have originally sprung from the peasantry. Many of them through years of sojourn in the city have lost all contact with the village, and have developed a class individuality of their own. Many others, however, have remained linked to the village and all its problems, either through blood-ties or through the continued possession of a parcel of land. Tens of thousands of Russian *mouzhiks* flock to the cities only for winters, and in spring as soon as the ground thaws out, they rush back to their homes to work the land.

Russia is, indeed, primarily a peasant country, not only in its economic structure, but in the qualities of its native genius. The peasant has cast his somber shadow over everything in Russian life. All forms of art, music, literature, dancing and painting, have drawn their richest sustenance from him. All great social and political movements have centered round him. The Decembrists, Slavophiles, Westerners, Populists and Social-Revolutionaries, have clustered round his fortunes and misfortunes. Even the orthodox Social-Democrats with their theoret-

ical exaltation of the proletariat, have had to bow to the peasant to attract his support. In 1905 twenty-four political parties, beginning with the reactionary Fatherland Union and ending with the extreme Maximalists, flaunted a bait to the *mouzhik* to attract his following, for they all knew that their success depended upon his support more than upon anything else. Indeed, without the following of the unkempt *mouzhik* no political party in Russia ever can hope to attain national prominence, and no government ever can expect to maintain itself in power long. Although not the direct driving force of the Revolution—the city proletariat has assumed that rôle for the present—he is, nevertheless, the power that pushes on, or else beats back this force. He is, in other words, the court of last resort, the final decisive element in the Revolution.

And yet in our discussion of the Russian Revolution, we have exhibited a tendency to ignore the peasant. Many of us seem to be under the impression that the peasant is ignorant, docile, easily swayed into following this or that party, easily manipulated by clever leaders for this or that purpose, a man without a will and a goal of his own. This impression is utterly and thoroughly false. True, the peasant is ignorant—more than half can neither read nor write—but ignorance does not imply stupidity, no more than a college training implies intelligence.

On the contrary, in his own way the peasant is highly intelligent. And not only has he a will and a goal of his own, he has fought desperately for years, for generations, for the realization of this goal. To understand the peasant, his turn of mind, his aims, his wishes, his ideals, the part he has played in the revolutionary movement, and the part he is destined to play in the future of Russia, it is necessary to become acquainted with his world, his economic condition, his political status, his educational opportunities, his social environment, for it is in these that his state of mind has been molded, and his revolutionary aspirations reared.

To understand these is to understand the peasant, and to understand the peasant is to understand the destiny of the Revolution.

It is with the aim of helping the English-speaking reader to gain such an understanding, that this book has been written.

In conclusion I wish to take the opportunity to express my thanks to A. Yarmolinsky, chief of the Slavonic Division of the New York Library, for his many valuable suggestions and criticisms, and to Lionel Danforth Edie, Associate Professor of History at Colgate College, for his constant counsel and encouragement.

M. G. Hindus.

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FOREWORD

ANYONE who has been among the Russian peasants knows that no people on earth has richer possibilities. As I went about Russia in 1917 and noted how methodically these peasants had been shut away from light and hope, I came to feel that the régime of Tsars and nobles was an emanation from the Bottomless Pit. Here is a book, honest, sober and wise, which describes the plight to which one-twelfth of the human race had been brought. It is fortunate that at a time when our newspapers exaggerate the blunders and confusion of the new order, Mr. Hindus faithfully depicts for us the lot of the peasants under the super-greed and super-ferocity of the old régime.

This book is so concrete, so careful of fact, so impartial, and so free from propaganda, that I am sure that, a hundred years hence, historians of the Russian Revolution will quote it with respect.

EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS.

"Revolutions don't spring up over night;
revolutions gather through the ages;
revolutions come from the long suppression of the human spirit;
revolutions come because men know that they have rights,
and that they have been disregarded."

WOODROW WILSON.

THE RUSSIAN PEASANT AND THE REVOLUTION

THE RUSSIAN PEASANT AND THE REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

THE PEASANT AT HOME

WHAT a painfully picturesque sight a Russian village is! As you approach it in a straw-filled springless, jolting cart over a crusty or sludgy road, winding beneath a leaden sky, your eyes wander over grain fields, now luxurious in growth, now desolate, almost bare; some *mouzhik* lazy or ailing was late with his sowing or else botched his work. Here a stunted grove peeps out from the valley, there barren hillocks, a withered meadow, a spacious pasture, with scrawny cows stirring lazily amidst riotous weeds; yonder a patch of wild bushes, where potatoes or rye should have grown; close by a swamp, which, if drained, would have yielded bountiful root-crops; over all hover a spaciousness, a silence, a gloom; dense flocks of crows blacken earth and air; and far away, merging into the hazy sky, is a dark-bluish wall of forest, standing like a sentinel over the drooping village and its huddle of humanity!

You draw close to the village. A small moss-covered shrine nestling in the shade of stately pines or birch, greets your eyes. It is capped by a small cross, and is kept open in summer; inside you see a row of bright-colored crucifixes hanging in somber frames all around the walls, their backs wrapped neatly in snow-white linen. In front of the shrine, rooted in the ground is a tall massive cross with a wooden statuette of Jesus, crucified, nailed at the top. If you are orthodox you remove your hat, bow low, and make the sign of the cross over your body. Often you can see wandering beggars or pilgrims with heavy packs on their backs kneeling in an attitude of devotion before this shrine.

You come to the gateway. On holidays and after dark the big ponderous gate is closed. But you do not always have to bestir yourself out of the wagon to open it. If the weather is fine, a motley crowd of boys and girls loiter around, and upon seeing you approach, all of them to the littlest tot, hurl themselves upon the gate, and push it open amidst a chorus of wild yells, and then they run after you, hands stretched out and shouting at the top of their voices, the dogs in the vicinity eagerly joining in the chase, which is kept up, until you throw something to the crowd; anything will satisfy them—a piece of white bread, a lump of sugar, a few matches, a ginger cake, a small coin—anything at all. They all dive

after it like fish after a crumb, and they pull and push, and abuse each other vehemently in the mad scramble after the precious reward.

You enter the village. Two rows of somber log-huts built on the open ground, with small windows and thatched roofs, in places moss-covered and grown over with weeds; a straggling street sometimes with no beginning, no middle, and no end—something that they call a street in Boston—in winter a deep bed of snow, in spring and summer a deep bed of dust or river of mud; no pavements, no sidewalks, excepting here and there a shapeless plank on stones or a heap of brush stumped down; no lawns, no flower beds; no lamp-posts and, therefore, no lights at night; in front of each house in the street an open well with a massive sweep, and not far away a big manure pile, the dung after a rain oozing into the well; hens, ducks, geese, pigs, loiter everywhere, and crowds of children, dirty-faced, half-naked, with lumps of bread and cold potatoes in their hands, playing boisterously. Such is the appearance of a village in Great and White Russia!

Even less inviting is the interior of a peasant's hut. There is no door from the street. To enter it you must go into the courtyard, which is always thickly strewn with rags, egg-shells, bones, garbage, and all manner of filth, for the peasant housewife dumps her refuse into the yard. In spring and fall and at other

times after a heavy rain, the yard, especially if it is on low ground, turns into a puddle of slush. You wade through it in a big pair of boots or else barefooted with your trousers rolled up to your knees. You come to the door, press down a projected latch and it opens. It is a single door and so low, that if you are above average height, you bow your head, else you bump into the projecting beam. The first room you enter is the *seny*—a sort of vestibule with no windows and no light, excepting what dribbles in through the crannies in the walls or the thatch overhead. In this room certain agricultural and house implements are kept and provisions are stored. It is always cold and damp, and smells of rotting wood and musty bread.

In back of the *seny* is a small compartment with a little window. This is the clothes-press and the dressing parlor and the bread-box, all in one. In the corner you perhaps see a trunk covered with a white linen cloth. In it is the most sacred possession of the older peasants—their burial clothes. Of course, they make these while they are alive from the best material they can afford. Now and then the housewife, if she is somewhat advanced in years, will steal into this compartment, take out her burial garments, try them on, and examine herself in a mirror, made from a piece of glass with a black cloth on the back—just to see how beautiful she will look, when she is dead!

In front of the *seny* are the living quarters, usually

only one room, fair-sized, dark, damp, fetid, smoky, with bare walls, a floor of earth or rough boards,—always, excepting at Easter or Christmas, in sad need of scrubbing. In the place of honor in the corner, directly beneath the ikons, stands a big bare polished table; near or around it, crude backless benches, often also a few chairs, and heavy planks around the walls. Then there is the *polati*, a wide spacious platform, resting against the back wall, which serves as a sleeping place. There is no mattress on it, no pillow, no sheets, no blankets, no semblance of bedding, excepting loose straw or sacks stuffed with straw and covered with a home-woven hemp cloth. When bedtime comes, the peasant pulls off his boots, if he has any on, and drops on the *polati*, usually in his clothes. Of night-shirts he has not begun to dream yet. If the family happens to be very large every available inch of space on the *polati* is occupied. In summer the congestion is greatly relieved, owing to the fact that the young people sleep outdoors. The mother usually has her infant beside her to be near and nurse it, when it wakens in the night, and it occasionally happens that she rolls upon it in her sleep, and chokes it to death.

There are not many windows in a peasant hut, perhaps about two facing the street and two facing the courtyard. They are very small in size and drip constantly with steam and dirt. If a pane breaks,

it is not so readily replaced, not even by the richer peasant, because the glass has to be bought, and the *mouzhik,* loathes to buy things. Not that he is by nature a miser, only money is such a precious possession, that he hates to part with it. He stuffs up the hole in the window with rags, flax, hay, or boards it up altogether, and the entire summer passes, sometimes together with a good portion of the autumn, before he finally steels himself to the expense of putting in a new pane. If he is very poor, he does not replace it at all. In fact, many a poor peasant has no glass in his windows, because glass is expensive. Of course, it is unsanitary to shut out the light from the house, especially when there is so precious little of it at best. But it is cheaper to use flax, rags or boards, than to buy glass.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the peasant's hut, is the oven, a big brick structure, occasionally whitewashed, but usually black with soot, sprawling clumsily over a wide space. It is really a marvelous institution; there is scarcely anything in the world to compare with it in the variety of purposes it serves, and the multitude of functions it performs. In it, of course, the cooking and the baking are done, and the laundry is boiled. In it the family disinfecting is done. In it the peasant takes his bath. If he has no regular bath-house, he crawls inside, like a snail into its shell, taking with him a bucketful of cold

water to splash over his head now and then. Waves of fierce heat beat upon his body and fairly scorch the flesh, but he does not seem to mind it—in fact the hotter the bricks, the more he enjoys the bath. Surely gehenna can have no terrors for such a man. Accidents, of course, happen. A man with a weak heart occasionally succumbs to the heat. On the other hand there are peasants so vigorous, that they leap out from the oven, red and steaming with heat, run outside into the snow, rub themselves with it and roll around like an animal. Oh, no, they do not catch cold! They seem to be immune from it.

But to return to the oven. The top of it is a brick platform, very wide, spacious and warm. There during the cold weather the older folks sleep at night or rest during the day; there visitors are put up for the night; there children have their playground during the dreary winter months; there the peasant has his hospital. If he has a headache, he climbs up there to cure it; if he has a stomach-ache he climbs up there and stretches out on the hot bricks; if he has diphtheria, typhoid, pneumonia, croup, he is carried up there and bundled up in heavy wraps.

At the bottom of the oven or rather under it, in the ground, is a dug-out, and that is the hen-house. There the hens roost, and "set" and lay their eggs, and if you wish to get the eggs, you must crawl inside, face down and flat, and wiggle snake-like over to

where you see the eggs. There is no other way of getting out the eggs, unless you rake them out with a stick and run the risk of smashing them.

This, then, is the interior of a peasant's hut. In summer with doors and windows open, and air and wind and sunshine streaming in abundantly, and the people staying out in the field all day, and only the older ones sleeping inside, the peasant home, however wretchedly furnished and cared for, is at least tolerably clean. It is different in winter, when it is so congested that it cannot be kept clean, for, be it remembered, that though the *mouzhik* may be so unlearned as not to know the multiplication table, he on the whole quite thoroughly approves of it. He multiplies rather rapidly. Large families are the rule and not the exception. And then there are the grandparents and perhaps some non-relative, an adopted orphan or an illegitimate child, all living in the same room which is kitchen, bedroom, dining hall, reception parlor and during the cold months also calf-pen, pig-sty and lamb stall!

And then there is the smoke in the house, blue and dense and penetrating. It comes first from the chips which light the house during the dark hours. Not all peasants have lamps, and of those that have, many find oil expensive on occasions, and so they burn wooden chips, long and slender and dry. The light, of course, is dim and shaky—a painful strain

on the eyes—and the chips have to be replaced about every ten minutes, they burn so fast; but worst of all is the smoke they give off, clouds hanging in heavy blue wreaths all over the room. Another source of smoke in the house is the fire-place. Not every peasant has a chimney in the oven, and whenever a new supply of fuel is thrust inside, the smoke has no outlet to the open air and puffs its way into the room. But even when there is a chimney attached to the oven, a squall of wind will occasionally drive back a cloud of smoke, or defective flue arrangements will not provide a proper outlet for it, and it pours into the house. But why, the reader will say, does not the *mouzhik* open the windows and doors and let the smoke out and the fresh air in? That would be hygienic, and the peasant might be induced to do it, if he were provided with a magic screen which would separate the smoke from the warmth, let the one out and keep the other in! In the absence of such a screen if the doors and windows are thrown open, the house becomes chilled, and whenever it comes to a choice between smoke and warmth on the one hand and cold on the other, the *mouzhik* always prefers the first. It is much cheaper. No wonder disease of the eyes and blindness are so widely prevalent in the Russian village.

The dress of the peasant is simple enough. Excepting in the central, so-called commercial provinces,

clothes are very largely made from homespun material, flax, hemp or wool. Underclothes are practically unknown even among the well-to-do. Trousers and a smock made from linen or wool, with a belt at the waist, constitute the chief articles of apparel for men. The young fellows, especially those that work in the city in winter, wear on Sundays and holidays factory-made clothes of modern, that is, German style. In winter the peasant wears a *svitka*—a long home-made woolen cloak, a sheepskin coat, both of the simplest pattern and of the same style for men and women. Many a family have only one sheepskin coat; only the older members wear it by turns.

Woman's dress is likewise simple—a linen shirt, a bodice and skirt made from fustian or calico and often gorgeously embroidered, and a large kerchief of variegated colors done into the shape of a hat with long fringes hanging loose all around the head. Girls are very fond of gay colors, especially red, and if they can afford it, they love to buy beautiful ribbons for their hair.

As to foot-gear on work days in summer, men and women go barefooted, as a rule. On holidays they wear long coarse boots, if they can afford them, which many cannot, especially in the non-commercial provinces. There bast-shoes, which were common in western Europe during the middle ages, are still

in everyday use. They are made from the bark of certain trees, long narrow strips, plaited together into a spacious sandal and tied to the leg with a leather strap or an ordinary stout string. Moisture easily seeps into the sandal and wets the feet, thus inviting colds and rheumatism. Felts are not unknown, but rubbers are quite rare. Only the young men who have spent a considerable time in the city are likely to wear them, and such is their pride in them, that they often put them on in the hottest day in summer. Children go mostly barefooted the year around, and when they are sent on errands in winter they slip on father's or mother's boots. Women, as a rule, wear stockings, which they themselves knit. Very few men wear socks. Instead they wrap around their feet linen or woolen bandages.

Not many peasants can boast of more than two changes of clothes. Some consider themselves fortunate, if they have only one that looks respectable. Fashion matters little, and has only begun to change in the villages that lie close to the cities. In the remote rural districts the same blouses, same bodices, same skirts, same headgear, are worn from generation to generation. Owing to the high tariffs on cotton and cotton goods even the cheapest cloth was too high-priced for the peasant, and he could not afford to make a new smock or new shirt as often as he wished. Usually he wears a garment as long as

it will cling to the body. If there is a rip or rent in it, he patches and repatches it, again and again, until it is almost all made over—from patches. Only when the material refuses any longer to be held together by the toughest thread, when it has actually been torn to shreds or has rotted, is it cast off, and then it is not discarded, but is put to some other uses.

Possessing only one or two suits of clothes and wearing them day after day, with no underwear on the body and constantly engaging in heavy menial work, it is not particularly easy for either a man or woman to maintain an especially clean bodily condition. That is why the peasant pays regular visits to the *banya*—the bath house. In some sections every family has its own *banya*. It is a small hovel in back of the house, with a big stove in it and a stone hearth; the stones are heated and water is poured upon them, giving off a dense hot vapor. Opposite the stove is a spacious staircase platform, the top board almost touching the ceiling. The bather mounts the platform as high as he can stand the heat, prostrates himself on it, and whips himself vigorously all over the body with a *venick*—a big bundle of rods with leaves on them, and then pours cold water over his head. If a peasant has no *banya* of his own, he takes his bath in the oven in the manner already described, or else he journeys to the town nearby, where there is a bath-house. A

bath he must take regularly, usually every Saturday, In summer outdoor bathing is quite popular, wherever there is a stream near the village. Bathing suits are as rare as crown jewels. Neither the men nor the women wear them, or think it necessary to wear them, though the bathing place be near the bridge in full view of travelers.

The food of the peasant is likewise simple. By force of circumstances he is essentially a vegetarian. In the first place the Greek Orthodox religion prohibits the use of all animal foods, including egg and milk products, but excepting fish, on Wednesdays and Fridays and at various lengthy intervals during the year. In the second place, meat is rather expensive; the hog or steer which the peasant raises, he is likely to sell in order to obtain the money with which to pay his taxes and debts. Even the well-to-do *mouzhik,* partakes of meat only on Sundays and holidays and at other special occasions, never every day. The chief articles of food are bread, made out of the whole grain of rye, and potatoes, also the various vegetables in season, cucumbers, beets, onions, turnips, radishes, garlic, and various milk products.

Native Americans have a strong prejudice against certain foods which are quite popular among the Russian peasants. There is garlic for example! There are many things an American would do before

he ever would taste of garlic. He does not particularly relish its fragrance. But a peasant will go out to the field to work, and take with him for his lunch a big lump of rye bread and a few pieces of garlic and make a heavy meal of them. He rubs the garlic on the hard part of the bread, puts salt over it and enjoys it immensely. Then there are the green onion tops. The American cook deposits them in the garbage can together with eggshells and banana peelings. The Russian peasant eats them as long as they last. He eats them raw, he eats them boiled, he eats them with bread and potatoes, he eats them without bread and potatoes. He never tires of them, as the American never tires of his pie. Often he makes a delicious dish out of onion tops. He cuts them into small pieces in a wooden bowl, beats them thoroughly with the bottom of a wooden cup, until they turn into a thick liquid, and then pours rich sweet cream over it. Eaten in such manner with an abundance of cream and fresh bread, well-buttered, it is a wonderfully delicious dish.

The most common dishes at the peasant table are *shtchui*—a vegetable soup, and *kasha*—a sort of gruel or mush made from buckwheat meal or some other cereal. If these dishes are properly cooked and flavored, they are as delicious and nourishing as anything ever prepared in any kitchen. The *shtchui* made from cabbage with a generous slice of beef

boiled in it, and enriched with a big cupful of cream, will waken hunger in the most dyspeptic Russian—be he *mouzhik* or grand duke. And the *kasha* steamed and baked and served hot with a generous layer of golden butter and a cupful of fresh sweet milk poured over it, is a dish for kings.

Only in one respect is the food of the American farmer similar to that of the Russian peasant. Both seem to be enamoured of griddle cakes, excepting that the peasant has not the maple syrup and the fried bacon, and the ham and eggs, to go with them. He flavors his "flapjacks" with some cheap vegetable oil, or else eats them plain.

Wheat flour products the peasant seldom uses. They are entirely too expensive. His own wheat he sells. Therefore white bread is a luxury. The same is true of sugar, which is very sparingly used. When a peasant drinks tea, he seldom drops the sugar into the glass. Instead he bites of it from the lump, and lets the tea pass over it thus making it last longer; sometimes he rolls his sugar under his tongue, so as to make it last still longer. Because white bread and sugar are such luxuries, it is only natural, that a boy who wants to be particularly kind to his sweetheart, should bring her instead of a box of chocolates an *abaranok*—a wheat roll the size and shape of a doughnut, and a lump of sugar.

The peasant is very fond of tea, and yet it can

hardly be said that tea is the universal beverage in the Russian village. In some provinces in the commercial section, nearly every peasant family has a *samovar,* and they make tea every day, and drink it during or after their meals. But in many provinces the peasant has no *samovar* of his own; there are villages in which there is not a single *samovar.* In these regions the peasant drinks tea only when he goes to town on Sundays, holidays, and at fair-time.

There are, however, other drinks quite common in the Russian village. There is *kvas,* made from stale bread soaked in water. It has a grayish color and is somewhat bitter. There is also *med,* made from honey and water. In places where there are birch forests, the peasant taps the trees in spring. He does not convert the sap into syrup or sugar, as does the American farmer with maple sap. Instead he stores it in open barrels in a barn or cellar, and when it ferments, he eats it with bread or drinks it, as we do soda or cider. It has a caustic taste, but is not intoxicating. Coffee is practically unknown among the peasants. Of cocoa and chocolate most of them have not even heard.

The feeding of babies is most pitiful. In summer the mother, being obliged to work in the field, cannot devote herself to the care of her infant. She cannot even stop now and then to nurse it. Artificial baby food preparations which are in such common use in

this country, are unknown in the Russian village, and if they were, few peasant mothers could avail themselves of them because of the expense. And so the mother feeds the infant a *Zhvatchka*,—she chews up a mouthful of bread or potato, empties it into a piece of thin cloth, ties it into a nipple, and puts it into the mouth of the child to suck! Or else she transfers this chewed food to the baby's mouth with her finger.

This, then, is the food of the peasant—simple, coarse, cheap, dry and dreadfully monotonous. And yet scarcely a year passes but millions of *mouzhiks* have not even enough rye bread and potatoes. Famine in Russia is about as periodic as it is in China, though China is only about half the size of Russia, and has twice as large a population.

Because of such living conditions disease is rampant in the Russian village, and the death rate is appallingly high, more than twice that of the United States. Smallpox, typhoid, croup, diphtheria, dysentery, invade the Russian village with cruel regularity, and exact a heavy toll from the peasant population, especially from children. In European Russia in 1912 out of every one thousand infants about one-third died before they reached their first birthday. In the same year according to the official registration figures, about eighty-two per cent of the population suffered from some ailment or other. The

following table of contagious diseases alone for the year 1911 tells its own story:

	Number of cases	*Percentage of population*
European Russia.....	15,949,265	13.23
Baltic Vistula govts...	405,783	3.26
Caucasus.....	1,577,457	13.11
Siberia.....	835,803	9.69
Central Asia.....	537,704	5.30

The village, strange as it may seem, is by far the heavier sufferer from epidemics and disease in general, and its mortality is higher than that of the city. A number of reasons account for this phenomenon. The condition of the peasant home is filthier than that of the city dweller. Scarcity of food is more periodic, and sanitation is practically non-existent; the health regulations that have found their way to the statute books might never have been written, as far as the peasant is concerned. He ignores them, whenever he can. Besides, physicians in the village are much rarer and difficult to reach. In this country there is one physician for every 800 persons. In European Russia in 1912, there was one physician for every 13,000 inhabitants in the cities and towns, and only one for every 21,900 in the country. Only the very largest villages are likely to have a resident doctor. As a rule doctors live in towns and cities, where they have a fairly prosperous clientele, and they do not readily come to the village, especially if

it is far away, and the caller is poor. In spring when the roads are rivers of slush and the village is for a time cut off entirely from the outside world, it is, of course, altogether impossible to bring a doctor, and spring is the season when disease is quite prevalent in rural Russia. Often it is even difficult to bring a *feldsher*—a sort of trained nurse—to the bedside of the patient. But at best a *feldsher* is a *feldsher*. He administers something, and often the patient recovers despite that something.

There are many occasions of sorrow in the Russian village, far too many, and there is nothing more heart-rending than a peasant in grief, especially a peasant woman. It is a dark day in the home in autumn, when the boy has to leave for a long period of military service in some far-away camp. It is a painful hour for the mother, when her newly-wed daughter parts from home; it is a bitter trial to a *mouzhik*, when his crops burn up or rot in the fields; or when a fire, flood, or storm, destroys his little home. Yet nothing, it seems to me, fills him with so much terror, as the coming of an epidemic. In the presence of its fierce destructiveness he feels as utterly alone and abandoned, as must have felt those Russian soldiers in Galicia, when they faced German steel and explosives with their bare hands. I shall never forget the winter when an epidemic assailed our village. Our ignorant loving mothers flitted about from

house to house, stunned, panic-stricken, searching, crying, pleading for advice and succor, which no one could offer. And how they prostrated themselves before the crucifixes, those poor simple souls, and prayed, and begged the Lord, so touchingly and tenderly, to spare their children from the deadly scourge!

Nor is disease the only misfortune that ravages the peasant. Fires are another, which are even more periodic than plagues, or epidemics. Now it is a burning coal from the chip that lights the house, which falling into a bundle of straw or a heap of kindling wood, starts a conflagration; now it is tongues of flame leaping out of the cracked chimney into the dry, brittle, and loosely packed thatch; now it is a burst of lightning; now it is a boy stealing tobacco and matches from father and sneaking off into the haymow to experiment with "smokes"; now it is an ugly demon visiting vengeance upon an enemy by applying the torch to his roof. Many are the causes. And once the blaze breaks out, it sweeps on, especially if the wind is favorable, from roof to roof, on and on, devouring the entire village,—houses, barns, horses, cows, sheep.

The *mouzhik*, of course, does not stand by idly with folded arms and watch the uproarious blaze devour his home—his most precious possession. He fights the fire, but he is helpless with his crude axe and big wooden pails. Few villages in Russia can

boast of a hose or pump and other fire-fighting weapons. With his home gone and perhaps his barns and part or all of his stock, too, there is nothing left for him to do but to go begging, unless he happens to have some coins tucked away somewhere in a jar. The insurance he collects, if he collects any at all, is quite insignificant. So he hitches up a horse, or else goes on foot with his wife and often with the children, and wanders from village to village, marches from house to house, stretches out his hand and says he is a *pogorely*—burned up. The housewife understands, and gives him something with a blessing—a measure of rye, a bundle of flax, a big slice of bread, or a sheaf of straw. In such manner the unfortunate man gathers a little personal property, and is enabled to rebuild his lowly hut and start life anew.

It is a hard life, indeed, the *mouzhik* is living, but particularly painful is the lot of the peasant woman. When a girl is only five years old, she is already harnessed to the daily tasks of the house. She pares potatoes, helps with the cleaning of the flax, or looks after the baby. In summer when mother is in the field, she is left in charge of the younger brother or sister all day. As she grows older her duties increase. She begins to sweep the house, spin flax, weave linen, carry in an armful of wood, a pail of water. When she is fifteen or sixteen, she is grown-up already. She is out in the field all day with her father and mother,

hoeing, reaping, pitching hay, loading grain. At seventeen or eighteen she is married. She moves to her husband's home, or rather to her husband's father's house, for usually the young married peasant has no dwelling place of his own while his father is still alive. It is a new place to her, a strange place. Perhaps it is far away from home, and she has never been away before, so, of course, she feels lonely and cries a good deal in the first days of her married life. Still, if the people in her husband's family are kind and considerate, and respectful, she soon becomes accustomed to her new environment, and feels more or less content. But if she is not treated with decency and forbearance, if father-in-law sulks, and mother-in-law scolds, and sister-in-law mocks, and brother-in-law insults, as is often the case, she has no peace of mind, and not even the tenderness and love of her husband can make her feel happy. Of course, she works all the time, like the other members of the family, and she is glad to work, to do her best, even if she is assigned the heaviest and most sordid tasks, but if she is at all sensitive, and she usually is, she cannot bear the fault-finding and the gibing, and the nagging now by this, now by that member of the family. But—there is no escape from it, she cannot go home to mother; if she did, she would be brought back with a rope round her neck, if necessary.

Then comes the period of motherhood,—the first

child, and the second, and the third, and the fourth,—they come regularly, about once a year,—scarcely is one weaned, before the other comes, and to her other multitudinous tasks and cares, new ones are added. She has no rest now, either on Sunday or holiday, and it is seldom that she enjoys a full night's sleep. Now this, now that child is sick, now this one, now that one, wakes up crying, and she has to tend it. And in the morning she feels so tired, so weary that she can hardly go to work, but she has to milk the cows, feed the hogs, cook the meals, bake the bread, and if it is summer, go to the field and toil away until dusk. No wonder that the peasant woman ages and withers so rapidly after she is married. At thirty or thirty-five she looks fifty, with a shrivelled face, sunken eyes, trembling hands. Perhaps it is because the peasant woman is so much of a worker that the men in the villages never muttered a word of protest against the introduction of equal suffrage after the Czar was overthrown.

Such is the life of the *mouzhik*. Surely he deserves a better lot. A worse can hardly be imagined. And no one intimately acquainted with his character will lay his plight to his stupidity, viciousness, or to his disdain for a more cheerful mode of existence. The peasant is slow of movement, but he surely is not lazy. He, indeed, does the heaviest work of the nation, and produces most of its wealth, as we shall

see in subsequent chapters. He is clumsy, but, as a rule, he is not shiftless. And, of course, he is not extravagant. On the contrary he is quite economical, often to a point of being miserly. Bad habits he has, many of them. He is after all pitifully human. On the whole, however, he is honest, good-hearted, intelligent, industrious.

The cause of his appallingly low state of civilization we shall find in the outward circumstances of his life, in conditions which he had not fashioned, and which he was powerless to resist.

CHAPTER II

UNDER SERFDOM

In olden times the Russian peasant was among the freest of men in Europe. He lived in his commune, governed himself, owned his land, all families related to each other usually working together, and together enjoying the fruits of their labor. He was a free citizen, politically entirely independent.

The frequency of wars, however, seriously undermined his economic stability, and he had to apply to his richer neighbor for help. Now he needed seed, now cattle, now implements, now something else, and he borrowed or purchased these from the landlord, usually obligating himself to pay back in labor. Occasionally instead of borrowing he preferred to move to the landlord's estate and work a plot of land on shares, the landlord furnishing all necessary tools and animal power. Or if he was totally destitute and heavily in debt, he sold his services to the landlord in advance for a period of years or even for life, thus becoming a voluntary serf. In such manner the peasant became more or less dependent economically upon the landlord, and while this dependence did not at first directly deprive him of civil and political liberties, it tended, nevertheless, to shift

the preponderance of authority to the landlord class.

The coming of the Mongols and the constant invasions of foreign tribes only further impoverished the peasant, and made him dependent upon his wealthy neighbor to an ever-increasing extent. What made things worse was the fact that free land was becoming a haunting memory. The rulers were giving it away to the church, the monasteries and the knightly classes. By the middle of the sixteenth century about two-thirds of the arable land of the Moscow Kingdom was already in the possession of the privileged classes and the clergy. There was nothing left for the poor peasant to do but to borrow capital from those who had it, or to hire out to the landed proprietor, or to mortgage himself for years in advance. He did not particularly relish this condition of servitude, whether temporary or permanent. He had happy memories of days of independence, when he had all the land he cared to till, and when he could easily come into possession of new land by simply migrating to an unsettled region, that had not yet been transferred as a reward to some man in the government service. He chafed under the yoke of voluntary serfdom. And when his lot became particularly oppressive, he unceremoniously packed up his belongings, forgot his contract and ran away. Labor was scarce, and landlords vied with each other to entice workmen away from

one another by offering better terms and lowering the tax obligations, so there never was any difficulty for a fugitive peasant to find a place to work.

The greater was the destitution of the peasant, the larger was the number of those who attached themselves to manors, the larger was the number of deserters. At first the peasant wandered from place to place alone with his family, then in companies, then in multitudes, ever swelling in size. Officials and landlords grew alarmed, the first because with a large portion of the population in a state of constant migration, it was difficult to collect taxes, and the second, because the constant uncertain ebb and flow of labor, was ruinous to the productivity of their lands. The smaller landlords were the heaviest sufferers. They could not compete with their richer neighbors in luring labor away one from the other. A clamorous demand arose to forbid the willful migration of the peasant, and in response to this clamor the all-powerful Boris Godunov issued in 1597 a series of laws curtailing the right of free migration. Change of places of labor or abode were permitted by these laws only once a year, on the 26th of November or St. George's day, and if a peasant escaped from the manor at any other time the landlord was given the right to bring him back by force, and this right held valid for five years from the day of the fugitive's departure.

The new law lessened but did not check the stream of migration, which continued to be an evil to the government and the landed nobles. In subsequent years the migration laws were further restricted, and in 1644 when the *Oolozhenie*, or new code of laws, was promulgated, a provision was inserted forbidding landlords to receive fugitive peasants, and the time limit beyond which a landlord lost the right to reclaim a peasant who had escaped from his manor, was abolished. Serfdom or bondage to the soil was now an accomplished fact.

The number of serfs was rapidly increased during the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. "Czars and emperors," says Maxime Kovalevsky, one of the most noted Russian historians, "endowed the members of the official classes with land in disregard often of their previous occupation by free communities, the members of which were forced to become the serfs of the persons who received the grant." Katherine the second was particularly energetic in the extension of serfdom. She introduced it in Ukraine, where previously no feudal class distinctions had existed, into the Don region, and into the southern provinces known as New Russia. Her lovers and trusted servants she lavishly rewarded with numerous "souls"—peasant-serfs. Upon the thirty-six conspirators who murdered her half-witted husband, Peter the third, she bestowed

sumptuous gifts in money, land and eighteen thousand serfs. To six of her lovers she gave, in addition to stupendous subsidies and annuities, one hundred thousand "souls." During her reign of thirty-four years she yoked into serfdom eight hundred thousand peasants, and her successor, Paul, within a period of only four years, added six hundred thousand more!

At first the serf did not suffer from any particular personal repressions. He was merely a life-long hired man, enjoying all the privileges and comforts of a hired man. But as time passed the landlords on the private estates and the officials on the government estates grew more arbitrary and more violent. They curtailed the serf's liberties with ever-increasing assiduity, until they reduced him to the position of a slave, though, when serfdom was first introduced, there was no thought in the mind of the initiators of the act, that it would ultimately lead to personal slavery. They only desired to provide a sure way of collecting taxes, and to protect the landlords against the inconveniences and losses occasioned by vagrant labor. But once the peasant was chained to the soil for life, it was easy for the landlords to come to regard him as their personal possession, existing solely for the promotion of their welfare, and, therefore, to be disposed of as they pleased.

It was only natural that laws should be passed depriving the peasant of all civil and personal rights.

In 1741 he was deprived of the right to take his oath of allegiance, so that he would have no occasion to think of himself as being in any way connected with the state, and, therefore, entitled to some consideration from those constituting the authority of the state. In 1742 he was denied the right any longer to enlist in the army. Many a serf found life on the manor so intolerable, that he preferred to be under the jurisdiction of the army officials, despite the cruelties and hardships of army life, rather than to be subjected to the will of the landlord, and since that resulted in the loss of "souls" to the latter, a law was passed prohibiting the peasant from seeking enlistment in the army, and in case he violated this law, he was to be flogged or exiled for life-long hard labor to Siberia. Peter the Great further forbade a serf to sue a landlord, and in 1767 Katherine the second prohibited him under the penalty of corporal punishment and life-long expulsion to Siberia from lodging a complaint against his master.

The peasant lost not only all civil and political, but also all personal human rights. The landlords could do anything they pleased with him. He was their property, which they could sell, pawn, auction off, exchange for a cow, a dog, a gun, or anything else. Landlords could separate father from mother, children from parents. They could pick husbands

for their girl-serfs, and wives for their man-serfs. If they took the life of a peasant, the law practically ignored the act. If one of them killed a serf that belonged to another, the owner of the dead man proceeded to the estate of the murderer, picked out the best serf there with his wife and children, bundled them into a cart, took them home, and nothing more was said of the murder. If they were ever sentenced to some form of disagreeable punishment, they sent the serf to receive the sentence. If they ever waged an armed feud against a neighbor, the serf did the fighting. If they were ever summoned to state service and failed to report at the appointed time, their serfs were held as hostages until they responded to the official call. The landlords' will was the only law that reigned over the peasant, and woe to the transgressors of this law! The landlords knew no pity, and whenever punishment was pronounced upon the delinquent serf, he was expected calmly and meekly to submit to it. If he was condemned to a flogging, he had to remove his own clothes, and lie down, while two of his fellow-serfs sat at his head, two others at his feet, and one or two others swished the birch rod over his body.

Lest it be thought that it was only in the early stages of serfdom that such treatment was accorded to the serf, and that with the advance of years and the humanizing tendencies of civilization, the land-

lords abated in their cruelty, I shall quote from the words of an eye-witness, a descendant of a highly aristocratic family in Russia, whose father was a prosperous landlord. He describes the treatment of the serfs in his own home a few years before the emancipation. The following is from Peter Kropotkin's "Memoirs of a Revolutionist."

"Ulyana, the housekeeper, stands in the passage leading to father's room and crosses herself; she dares neither to advance nor to retreat. At last after having recited a prayer she enters the room and reports in a hardly audible voice, that the store of tea is at an end, that there are only twenty pounds of sugar left, and that the other provisions will soon be exhausted.

"'Thieves, robbers!' shouts my father. 'And you are in league with them!' his voice thunders throughout the house. Our step-mother leaves Ulyana to face the storm. But father cries: 'Frol, call the princess! Where is she?" And when she enters he receives her with the same reproaches.

"'You also in league with the progeny of Ham; you are standing up for them,' and so on for half an hour or more.

"Then he commences to verify the accounts. At the same time he thinks about the hay. Frol is sent to weigh what is left of that, and our step-mother is sent to be present during the weighing, while father calculates how much of it ought to be in the barn.

A considerable quantity of hay appears to be missing, and Ulyana cannot account for several pounds of such and such provisions. Father's voice becomes more and more menacing. Ulyana is trembling but it is the coachman who now enters the room and is stormed at by his master. Father springs at him, strikes him, but he keeps repeating, 'Your Highness must have made a mistake.'

"Father repeats his calculations and this time it appears that there is more hay in the barn than there ought to be. The shouting continues; he now reproaches the coachman with not having given the horses their daily ration in full; but the coachman calls on all the saints to witness that he gave the animals their due and Frol invokes the Virgin to confirm the coachman's appeal.

"But father will not be appeased. He calls on Makar the piano-tuner and sub-butler and reminds him of all his present sins. He was drunk last week, and must have been drunk yesterday, for he broke half a dozen plates. In fact the breaking of the plates was the real cause of all this disturbance; our step-mother had reported that fact to father in the morning, and that was why Ulyana was received with more scolding than was usually the case, why the verification of the hay was undertaken, and why father continues to shout that this progeny of Ham deserves all the punishment on earth.

"On a sudden there is a lull in the storm. My father takes his seat at the table and writes a note. 'Take Makar with this note to the police station and let a hundred lashes with the birch-rod be given to him.'

"Terror and absolute muteness reign in the house.

"The clock strikes four, and we all go down to dinner; but no one has any appetite, and the soup remains in the plates untouched. We are ten at table and behind each of us a violinist and trombone player stands with a clean plate in his left hand, but Makar is not among them.

"'Where is Makar?' our step-mother asks, 'Call him in.'

"Makar does not appear and the order is repeated. He enters at last pale, with a distorted face, shamed, his eyes cast down. Father looks into his plate, while our step-mother seeing that no one has touched the soup tries to encourage us.

"'Don't you find, children,' she says, 'that the soup is delicious?' Tears suffocate me and immediately after dinner is over I run out, catch Makar in a dark passage and try to kiss his hand; but he tears it away and says, either as a reproach or as a question, 'Let me alone—you, you, too, when you are grown up, will you not be just the same?'

"'No, no, never!'

"Yet father was not the worst of landowners.

On the contrary the servants and the peasants considered him one of the best. What we saw in our house was going on everywhere, often in a much more cruel form. The flogging of the serfs was a regular part of the duties of the police and the fire brigade."

These were the things Kropotkin saw in his own house. Much worse things, he writes, occurred on other estates. He heard "of men and women torn from their families and their villages and sold or lost in gambling, or exchanged for a couple of hunting dogs, and then transported to some remote part of Russia for the sake of creating a new estate; of children taken from their parents and sold to cruel or dissolute masters; of floggings in the stable which occurred every day with unheard of cruelty; of a girl who found her only salvation in drowning herself; of an old man who had grown gray-haired in his master's service and at last hanged himself under his master's window; of revolts of serfs which were suppressed by Nicholas first's generals by flogging to death each tenth or fifth man taken from the ranks, and by laying waste villages whose inhabitants went begging for bread in the neighboring provinces. As to the poverty which I saw during our journeys in certain villages, especially in those which belonged to the imperial family, no words would be adequate to describe the misery to readers who have not seen it."

Arbitrariness, cruelty, disregard for human sensibilities, callousness to human woe—this was the attitude of most landlords toward the serfs until the very day of the emancipation. No wonder that Turgenev, Gogol, Grigorovitch, Chernishevsky and other literary men felt ashamed of their country for its toleration of this form of human bondage. Their descriptions of serf-life with all its accompanying ills and horrors, the degradation and corruption it wrought in master as well as in serf, and their eloquent pleas in behalf of the peasant, helped immeasurably to rouse the conscience of intelligent Russians, and to spur them into an insistent demand for the abolition of the evil institution.

In 1861 the serfs were freed, because as Alexander the second had expressed himself once at an assembly of landlords, "it is better that this should be done from the top than to wait until it is effected from below," and also because official Russia had learned during the Crimean war, that serfdom was the clay feet of the Russian giant, that with the peasant chained to the big estates and industries neglected, transportation lines undeveloped, Russia was doomed to a position of inferiority.

Thus the peasant was freed from serfdom. But the emancipation act could not give to him what he had lost in social and cultural development during two and a quarter centuries of bondage,

nor could it wipe out the effects of such a protracted period of subjection and stagnation.

Still he was industrious and strong, inured to hardships, and he had numerous friends who were burning with zeal to help him in his new life and to retrieve him from his mental sterility. Given the right of citizenship, of freedom of association with others, the opportunity to attend school, the peasant would have progressed rapidly in his social development, for whatever else he may be, he is not stupid, and he learns quickly. Yet neither the landlords, nor the officials wished the peasant to become cultivated. They lifted the yoke of personal slavery from him, because they clearly saw that its perpetuation would bring about their own downfall. But they were determined to keep him isolated and to hold him in subjection.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION

WINTER. The interior of a peasant hut; windows shut tight; an open fire in the oven; the air blue with smoke; in the corner the housewife and aides busy at their work washing, scrubbing, cooking; on the top of the oven the children playing, screaming, fighting; the air damp, stuffy, fetid; not a particularly inviting place to live in, still less to study in. Yet in many Russian villages in the absence of a separate school-house, recitations, such as they are, are conducted in these hovels, in the homes of the pupils.

You watch such a school in session. Two tables standing in a row over the entire length of the room with benches on each side; the pupils, all boys, sit close together, in shabby attire, unkempt, some with faces and hands unwashed, nearly all with hair long and uncombed; some barefooted, others in *lapti*, and still others in father's old boots. All seem busy at different tasks; some bent low over slates scrawling laboriously and slowly counting their strokes; others with books in hands reciting to themselves assigned lessons; still others wrestling audibly with problems of addition or subtraction. And in the corner is the

teacher now calling on this pupil, now on that to appear before him and recite his lesson in this or that subject. There is a constant loud buzzing and murmuring, as of people at a fair; no order, no discipline, no system; no division of grades, no organized courses, scarcely any text-books, no recess-periods, excepting at mealtime.

We had such a school in our village, a community of about 150 families, and there were three villages in the neighborhood, in which there were no schools at all, and no effort was made to provide any form of instruction for the children. Our school, as was the case with the others of the same type in Russia, was in session for only about four or five months in winter, every day, excepting Sundays and holidays, from morning until evening. It was supported entirely by our peasants, and was supervised, or rather was supposed to be supervised, by the parish church. The teacher was a peasant, largely a self-taught man. He could read and write Russian, not too fluently; he knew Slavonic, the psalter, the multiplication table, the four fundamental operations of arithmetic, the church songs and nothing else,—no geography, no history, no natural science, no fractions even. Knowing so little himself, it can easily be imagined how much he could impart to his pupils. But then he was paid only fifteen or twenty roubles a season and his board.

This, however, was not the only school, which the children of our village could attend. Fifteen miles away was another, the parish school, much more modern, located in a building of its own, a spacious whitewashed structure with small windows, a big yard in front for a playground and a river in the back for skating and other winter sports. The interior was a large room, very untidy, with portraits of the Czar and Czarina and ikons on the wall, and equipped with long tables and benches. There were usually two teachers there, both of clerical training; the courses of study were more or less systematized, but as we shall see later, very little real enlightenment was imparted to the pupils in the parish school, so little that a large percentage of its graduates a few years after the completion of their course, fell back into a state of illiteracy. And besides, the parish school was always overcrowded. There was nowhere nearly enough space for all the applicants in the villages within its jurisdiction. Only very few boys from our village attended it.

The best primary school in Russia was, of course, the *zemstvo* school. In many districts it was a new brick building, with large windows; the class room was spacious, light, airy, clean; transoms were always open, even on coldest days; the walls were hung with photographs of authors, maps, blackboards; the desks had inclined tops, and were supplied with ink-

wells; the teacher had all the marks of a "modern," clean-shaved, neatly-dressed, in short coat, and trousers on outside of boots, often wearing a collar and tie, or else a blouse, and with a handkerchief instead of the sleeve of his coat, to wipe his nose with. In equipment, in methods of teaching, in courses of study, in general aim and in practical achievements, the *zemstvo* schools were far superior to any other, even to the ministerial schools, which the government in the last years of its existence, had begun to build on an extensive scale, chiefly in opposition and as an antidote to the *zemstvo* schools. But there were not enough *zemstvo* schools to accommodate all those desirous of attending them, and they were so hemmed about by a multitude of restrictions, that their educational value was seriously impaired.

We shall, however, best understand the tendencies and influences of the schools in the Russian village, by surveying briefly their origin and growth from the earliest times to the present day.

Education in Russia has followed a slow course. Prior to the coming of Peter the Great there were no regular schools in Russia, unless we count as such the desultory efforts of the clergy to conduct classes for youths desirous of dedicating themselves to the services of the church. As a rule outside of the clergy instruction whether in religious or secular subjects was a monopoly of private tutors, who taught in the

homes of their pupils, children of wealthy families. The range of knowledge of these teachers was quite limited. Exact sciences they scarcely studied. They knew subtraction and addition, and now and then they dabbled into the mysteries of multiplication and division, but with little success, so the chroniclers report. Fractions completely puzzled them. They could draw certain geometric figures or rather copy them as a child copies diagrams without understanding their meaning. All they knew of geography was that the world rested on the back of four whales. Medicine they eschewed entirely, content to let foreigners monopolize its study and practice. Until the second half of the seventeenth century the then existing *azbukovnik*, a sort of encyclopedic dictionary of universal knowledge, regarded music, geography, astronomy and even arithmetic as sinful subjects. Such was the dread of the rulers of scientific learning that in 1676 the nobleman Matveyev, in whose possession was discovered a text-book of algebra for the instruction of his son, was accused of dealing with evil spirits by means of those mysterious ciphers in the book, and he was deprived of all his property and banished to the wilderness of Archangel to expiate his sins.

Peter the Great in his passionate resolve to make of Russia a powerful civilized state, realized the urgent need of trained men to assist him in his diffi-

cult tasks. With this purpose in view he opened in 1714 the first arithmetic schools for children of all classes of society. Only practical subjects were taught in these schools, reading, writing, geography, geometry, arithmetic, for Peter had neither interest in nor reverence for knowledge for its own sake. He wanted workers to construct ships, fortresses, and to build cities. At one time he had planned to make attendance in these schools compulsory, and to enforce this decree he had hoped to prohibit marriage to those who had not completed their required courses of study. But nothing came of this plan. The church which hated Peter and called him the anti-christ, strenuously opposed his secular educational policies. Besides there were no teachers, no text-books, no ready buildings and no funds for such a grandiose system of popular education. At the end of Peter's reign there were only 110 elementary schools in Russia.

Incidentally, to appreciate the difficulty Peter would have had in putting into operation any extensive system of scientific education in Russia, we need only remind ourselves of the fate of the Academy of Sciences he had planned. That Academy was to be the center of Russian culture and research and serve as a guide and inspirer to those engaged in educational pursuits. The Academy was opened a year after Peter's death. Russia had no scholars compe-

tent to take charge of such an institution. So the authorities went to Germany and imported seventeen savants, all famous in their particular fields of knowledge. When they came to Russia—alas! there were no students in the Academy and none could be mustered in. So the authorities journeyed to Germany again and brought with them eight German students. Now the professors had audiences, but soon half of these students were drafted into government work, and no new ones came. It was then decided that to keep up the Academy the professors would lecture to each other.

During the reign of Catherine the second the question of schools for the peasants was raised again. In the intervening years since Peter's death, it had been entirely ignored, as was the problem of education in general, and Catherine who exalted learning and flirted with liberal ideals almost as zealously as she did with handsome courtiers, wished to raise Russia to the level of education which prevailed in Prussia. In 1780 a commission, she had appointed to make a survey of the problem had presented a plan for the establishment of a school in every village, one for each 100–250 families, under the supervision of the church and with the compulsory support of the parishioners. The plan was not to the taste of the landlords. What need was there for schools for the *mouzhik*, they asked?

Of what good was education to him? It would only wean him from his work and breed restlessness and rebellion. In the end Catherine perceived the lurking dangers in her ambitious educational scheme, and she gladly abandoned it.

Thus at the end of the eighteenth century there were practically no schools for the peasants in Russia, excepting here and there their own primitive schools conducted in secret. Nor did the first half of the following century mark a substantial change in the situation. The decree of Alexander the first for the establishment of a parish school in every community, might never have been issued for all the practical good it achieved. The peasants were suspicious of the scheme, and, therefore, opposed it. They did not understand its significance and no effort was made to explain it to them. The landlords were even more hostile. Only the clergy showed a keen interest in the project. In the Novgorod province they offered their own homes for the housing of these schools, and in 1806, 100 of them were opened. Two years later they were all closed. In Olonetz 20 were started, in Archangel 9 and in other provinces similar numbers. But by 1819 not a vestige of them had remained. In 1826 there was an official record of 600 elementary schools in Russia. But it was only a paper-record—none of the schools existed in actuality. It could not

be otherwise in the beginning of the reign of Nicholas the first, who suppressed even the private schools of the nobility, because he wished "to cleanse the Russian student's mind of that disastrous plethora of half-assimilated knowledge, that impulse toward extreme visionary theories, the beginning of which is moral deterioration, and the end ruin!"

If Nicholas had had his way not a single peasant would have learned to read and write during his reign. But circumstances were stronger than his will. The Ministry of Public Domains, which managed the crown and state lands, on which lived twenty million serfs, needed a large army of clerks to look after the interests of the imperial family in its own serf-communities, and to train such clerks the above Ministry, without even the knowledge of the Ministry of Public Instruction, which in its own realm sought to suppress education, opened special schools in many villages that were under its jurisdiction. The first of these schools were started in 1830. Students had to be drafted, for the peasants were suspicious and prejudiced against the efforts to compel them to undergo a training, the nature and purpose of which they did not understand. But once these schools were begun, they continued to spread, though ultimately by 1842 their aim was no longer to train special clerks, but to inculcate in the pupils sound moral

and religious principles. The government managed these schools, but the peasants were made to pay the cost of their maintenance.

Side by side with these schools on the crown lands, primary schools were also built on the state lands, and parish schools were started on the estates of private landlords. This was done not out of a desire to uplift the peasant, but partly as a concession to the demand of enlightened public opinion that something be done to spread education in the villages, and mainly with the aim of instilling proper ideas of loyalty and devotion to the Czar and the church, and thus to counteract the revolutionary tendencies that were permeating the peasantry. At the end of the reign of Nicholas the first there were 8200 elementary schools in Russia with 450,000 pupils, who, however, constituted only about three-fourths of one per cent of the entire population of 63 millions.

Such were the beginnings of primary instruction in Russia, not at all extensive, and prompted by a desire on the part of those officially directing the movement not to develop the capacities or stimulate the ambition or enlarge the mental faculties of the peasant population, but chiefly to breed in them an acquiescence in the prevailing mode of life and government.

Then came the emancipation. Now there was

an opportunity to open wide the avenues of enlightenment and learning to the freed serf. And on two different occasions in 1864 and again in 1876 the Czar and his ministers had, indeed, considered the problem of universal primary instruction. Commissions were appointed, investigations conducted, projects drafted, reports made and as in so many former instances, soon forgotten and abandoned. It was evident that the government had no desire to introduce universal elementary education in the village.

Only when the *zemstvos* appeared on the scene were earnest efforts made to promote primary instruction in rural Russia. The *zemstvos* were elective provincial assemblies with limited self-government, dedicated to benevolent activities, such as building hospitals, schools, libraries, mending roads and in other ways rendering assistance to communities and individuals. Though the preponderant representation in them was of the landlord class, because of a regulation limiting the voting power of the peasant, the *zemstvos*, nevertheless, were as a rule, loyal to their trust, and they laid a solid foundation for popular education in Russia. It is no exaggeration to say that in the 34 provinces in which they functioned, there would have scarcely been a village by this time without some form of a schoolhouse, if the government had

not incessantly interfered with their efforts, even to the point of compelling the dismissal of members especially active in educational work. As an indication of the extent of their educational activities it is only necessary to point to the fact that in 1868 in 27 provinces they spent on education 408,000 roubles, not a huge sum, but larger than any other body in Russia had ever before spent for such an object. In 1869 the amount was doubled, and in the following years it increased rapidly as shown in the table below.

Year	*Roubles*
1881	3,684,000
1891	5,334,000
1901	16,544,000
1911	52,278,000

The government gladly shifted the responsibility of supporting the primary schools in the villages to the *zemstvos*. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the government expended one-fifth of its annual budget on the army and navy, another fifth on salaries and administrative expenses, and only 0.4 per cent on elementary education. In 1910 nearly one billion roubles was spent in Russia on the primary schools, and the *zemstvos* and city councils paid a full two-thirds of the sum.

The *zemstvos*, however, cheerfully assumed their burden. They continued to build new schools and

to raise the standards of those already in existence, despite the difficulties that were put in their way. Their schools crowded out the others, especially the parish schools. The clergy had lost interest in the latter. It was a thankless job. They furnished their homes and their time gratuitously, and they saw no reason why they should do it, when the *zemstvos* were paying salaries to their teachers and rent for the houses they were using for school purposes. In 1881 there were only 4440 parish schools on record, and most of these upon investigation were discovered to exist on paper only. In Yekaterinoslav, for example, 400 parish schools were supposed to have been in operation, but Dimitry Tolstoy, ober-procureur of the Holy Synod, learned upon inquiry that not one of them had actually been in session.

Though the *zemstvo* schools offered only three and four year terms, and their courses of study were quite modest—reading and writing of Russian, arithmetic, the rudiments of geography, and prescribed church subjects—the government grew alarmed over their popularity. Society approved of them and supported them generously, and there was danger in that. A campaign of repression and coercion followed. The government did not allow the *zemstvos* to build advanced schools, though there were scarcely any in Russia which a peasant might at-

tend, and in 1902 when the *zemstvos* were planning to introduce universal elementary education, the government put its heel on the project by prohibiting them from raising their taxes by more than two per cent a year, thus making it impossible to obtain the funds necessary for the realization of the contemplated plan.

Further to counteract the advance of the *zemstvos* schools the government began to build its own schools, religious, under the auspices of the church, and secular under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction. It began a campaign of agitation against the *zemstvo* schools, pronounced them too expensive, inefficient, not expressive of the national spirit and remote from the immediate interests of the people, who needed not learning as much as a deeper and truer understanding of God, the church and loyalty to the existing régime. It was the ghost of Nicholas the first come to life again. An elaborate series of statutes was worked out for the operation of the church schools. Religious subjects,—the Slavonic language, prayers, the psalter, Bible stories, the catechism, were the basic topics of study in the curriculum. Priests were immediately ordered to open such schools. Those that failed to comply promptly with the order, were fined, and those that fulfilled it immediately were awarded prizes out of the fines of their more tardy colleagues. From year

to year state appropriations for the support of the church schools increased, and in course of time they received the lion's share of the annual appropriation for elementary education. The ministerial schools, modelled after those the *zemstvos* were operating, and intended to supplant the latter, roused little public favor, and in the provinces where the *zemstvos* functioned, very few of them were built.

The government supervised all courses of study and strove to limit the amount of instruction in cultural subjects. Literature was practically eliminated. History, insomuch as it was given, was more a record of fables, saints and miracles, than a study of past events and institutions. Nothing that might stimulate original thought or questioning was permitted. Only "safe" subjects were sanctioned. In late years manual training and agriculture were introduced. On the face of it that might appear an advanced step in education and one might be tempted to bestow a word of praise upon the Ministry of Instruction for its quickness in emulating western educational ideals. But when one considers that the course of instruction in the Russian primary schools even in the best of them, lasted only four years, that a large number of students left before they graduated, that purely educational subjects were already limited, one cannot help feeling, that it was a mere mockery of education to thrust upon the primary schools

manual training and agriculture. The real motive for this extraordinary modernness of Russian official educators, was a desire so to crowd the study hours of both student and teacher, as to leave them little or no time for the discussion of political and social problems.

Another adverse feature of the Russian school system was the quality of the text-books. The Ministry of Instruction had to approve of all books that were used in the schools. These books had to be "safe," so that the men best fitted to write or compile a text-book, could not do so conscientiously and have their work accepted by the school officials. Consequently, the task of composing such books fell upon mediocre men, or men who would play safe at the expense of truth. In either case the best product from an academic standpoint was out of the question. One needs only to look over the pages of the histories of Rozhdestvensky and Ilovaysky, which were widely studied in the Russian schools, to convince himself of the low and perverted standards of scholarship of the makers of Russian text-books.

Perhaps the most pitiful aspect of the Russian primary school was the position of the teacher, both legal and economic. From the government's standpoint his was a most responsible position. He had to be a safe man. If he was not in every possible way, he could not be tolerated. Therefore, an elab-

orate system of espionage over him was established. Every official and public servant above and around him kept vigilant watch over every move he made and every word he uttered. If the village constable, a Czar in his realm, was at any time displeased with him, he scolded and threatened him with serious punishment. If the priest missed him in church at any time or did not particularly like his conduct, or had a personal grudge against him, he censured him severely, or reported him to superiors, and he was either transferred or else discharged. If any of the local district or national school inspectors wandered into his class-room—and there was a vast swarm of them, always prying not only into the official duties of the teacher, but also into his private affairs and home life—and observed something in the personal conduct of the man or in his methods of teaching or in his manner of treating the pupils, that did not meet with his approval, there was, of course, trouble galore for the school-master. Who that has ever been in a Russian school when an inspector visited it, and watched him pass from aisle to aisle putting questions now to this, now to that pupil and muttering approval or disapproval, can forget the agitation, the trembling, the low and profuse bowing of the teacher, like a serf to his master, and the constant mumbling of the servile "*slushayus*" (at your service, sir)?

More tragic was the economic position of the teacher. There was not a class of public servants in Russia, who on the whole lived in such straitened circumstances as did teachers. Policemen, it is true, were poorly paid. But they drew an income from bribes. The teacher, however, had no opportunity to solicit bribes, and if he had, he was, as a rule, too honorable to stoop to such methods of gain. The following table shows how miserably paid the primary school teacher in Russia was compared to his colleague in other countries:

	Salary per year in roubles
Italy	620
France	481
Holland	875
No. America	1320
England	1665
Russia	360

The sum of 360 roubles the Russian teacher began to receive only in recent years and then not everywhere. Yet a year before the war broke out a survey made by the "*Russkaya Shkola*," a pedagogic magazine, disclosed the fact, that a teacher who was single living in a village in a manner comporting with his social position, required for his sustenance 536.4 roubles, while a family man needed 1072.8 roubles, and if he had children attending school in the city he required several hundred roubles more.

Being so poorly paid many teachers did not dare to marry. It was about all they could do to support themselves. In summer they searched everywhere for work, in the manner of an American youth working his way through college, in hotels, restaurants, on farms, in banks, on excursion boats, as porters on trains, anywhere at all, and it was only because of their summer earnings that they were enabled to make ends meet. It is not strange at all, therefore, that many teachers left their posts shortly after they accepted them, and searched for work in more profitable occupations. When the government assumed a monopoly of the vodka shops and advertised for clerks to run them, thousands of teachers abandoned their pedagogic careers and became saloonkeepers.

What was the net result of all these conditions? First, there was a woefully small number of schools in Russia, and these were overcrowded. In 1916 in the United States out of a population of one hundred millions, nearly twenty-four millions were in school, while in Russia in 1912 out of a population of one hundred and eighty millions, scarcely seven millions could find accommodations in the schools. In 1911 the ratio of the male pupils in the elementary schools of European Russia to the entire male population was 5.48 per cent; that of the female pupils to the female population 2.6 per cent giving

an average of 4.04 per cent, as compared with 15.9 per cent in Germany. Secondly, according to the report of the investigating commission of the third Duma, the schools were uniformly poor, the moral and educational influences they exerted were insignificant; many of the graduates soon after leaving school dropped back into the class of illiterates. No wonder that at the time the war broke out at least fifty per cent of the Russian peasants were entirely unschooled and could not even sign their names.

Being deprived of the opportunity of gaining education even after he was freed from serfdom, the peasant was fearfully handicapped in his struggle for self-improvement. If he had to write a letter or an address, or read a letter, or a government document, he had to go and search for somebody to do it for him, and often he had to pay a fee for such a service. Then, if he entered into some written contract with a middle-man or landlord, he was entirely at their mercy. They could cheat him to his last kopeck, and he could not help himself. No wonder that to this day the peasant is suspicious of written documents.

But worst of all is the social and political provincialism of the peasant. He knows little of the outside world, even of his own country. He is a stranger in his own fatherland. And when a great crisis

sweeps over Russia such as the European war, or the Revolution, he can see and think of it only in terms of his ignorance, or rather in terms of his very limited personal experience. All the political phraseology that is on the tips of our tongues in this country, is entirely foreign to him, and when we approach him with such phraseology he cannot understand us, and will not listen to us. This cardinal fact we must always bear in mind, when we wish to understand the state of mind of the peasant. When, for example, in the last days of the old government Minister Trepov in a last desperate attempt to rouse enthusiasm for his discredited régime, announced that the Allies had agreed to award to Russia the Dardanelles, the peasant was indifferent. He did not care whether Russia had the straits or not. In many instances he did not even know whether the Dardanelles or Constantinople was a mountain or a new brand of tobacco.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL POSITION OF THE PEASANT

When the emancipation of the serfs was proclaimed the officials explained to the world, that the peasant was incapable of properly caring for himself, that he had neither the experience, nor the education, nor the intelligence for that. Therefore he had to be placed under paternal guardianship. This was their excuse for continuing to domineer over the Russian village. Accordingly the emancipation act was so planned, that while it removed the personal tyranny of the landlord, it did not usher in personal freedom for the peasant. Bent upon holding in leash his rising discontent and protecting the interests of the landlords, the government hedged and hemmed in the peasant with a multitude of legal and social restrictions, which robbed him of the opportunity of working out his destiny in accordance with his own understanding. He became as a Russian writer aptly phrases it "the object and not the subject of rights."

What were these restrictions?

A consideration of their nature, manner of ap-

plication and effects, will disclose to us another force that was wrecking the welfare of the peasant, and will also make clear why the peasant has evinced a negative attitude toward law and a contempt for authority "from above."

In the first place the peasant was set apart from the other classes of society. His legal status was different from that of the burgher, the merchant, the nobleman. Up to 1906 he was barred from the higher institutions of learning and could not rise to important rank in the service. If a member of another class lived in a peasant community, he was forbidden to hold office there, or in any other direct way to help in the administration of its local affairs. He could not become a member of the peasant class, even if he wanted to. Likewise a peasant had no right to participate in the collective social activities of any of the other classes amongst whom he lived. His social isolation was as complete after the emancipation as it had been during serfdom.

Secondly he was chained to the *mir* (commune). The *mir* was his paternal guardian. Everything possible was done to render it difficult for him to extricate himself from its control. He could not leave the *mir* without its consent, and even then he had many obstacles to overcome before he could effect his departure. He had to have a passport, without which he could not move beyond a radius

of thirty *versts* from his home, and to get a passport it was necessary first to obtain a certificate from the *starosta*, the village elder, stating that he had no objection to the departure of the applicant, then to present it to the *starshina*, the district chief, then to the *pisar*, the district clerk, who issued the passport, gave it to the *starshina*, and the latter delivered it to the petitioner. It took months at times to unwind this clumsy roll of red-tape, which was created solely for the purpose of keeping the peasant tied to the commune as long as possible.

The supremacy of the rule of the *mir* would have perhaps proved of advantage to the peasant, if he had been allowed freedom to formulate and execute its corporate will. Then the *mir* would have been what it originally was in olden times, a throughly democratic and self-governing body. In small matters, the *mir* was not interfered with. At the *skhods*, the village meetings, the *mir* could, for example, elect its shepherds for the summer; it could decide where to pasture the cows, where the horses, where the sheep and hogs (these are usually pastured together); it might exercise its own discretion in levying the amount of grain each member was to contribute to the village granary—a sort of grain bank where in winter and spring the needy might borrow rye, barley, oats, for seed or bread; it might build its own blacksmith shop and windmill,

and choose its own smith and miller; it might enact a law prohibiting the keeping of geese or turkeys, if they proved destructive to crops. In all such matters of a purely local non-political character, which did not in any way encroach upon the aims and policies of the government, the *mir* enjoyed full liberty of action.

But in the larger and more significant aspect of the individual and social life of the peasant, the *mir* was deprived of the privilege of formulating its own will. It had to conform to the dictatorial rules from above. That was precisely the reason why the individual peasant was subjected to the control of the *mir*. It was much easier for the government to exercise its authority over the peasantry through the *mir*, than through dealing with each one individually. The *mir*, for example, was held responsible for the payment of taxes of all its members, and its various officials were empowered to deal drastically with a delinquent individual. They might flog him, appoint a guardian over him, hire him out and compel him to earn his unpaid tax. The *mir* was also given the right to exile any of its members to Siberia without trial, and beginning with 1886 it was further authorized to settle domestic difficulties, such as the division of property, family feuds arising out of quarrels over land and similar matters. In short the government strove to con-

vert the *mir* into a weapon which it could wield effectively over the peasant and keep him as completely in subjection as did the landlords before the emancipation.

The government knew, however, that it could not entirely depend upon the *mir* for the execution of its orders and the enforcement of its will. After all the *mir* was made up of peasants who knew each other, helped each other, sympathized with each other. They might ignore a command they disliked, or disregard the prescribed treatment for the unruly and delinquent. Besides, left to itself the *mir* might become a hotbed of unrest, and revolutionary agitators might acquire the leadership over it, and lead the peasant into rebellion. To forestall such a contingency the government thrust upon the village an army of officials with powers to enforce whatever rules were deemed necessary for the *mir* to observe.

There were all manner of officials in the Russian village, high and low, uniformed and ununiformed, some elected, most appointed. There was the *ispravnik*—the district police commissioner—a man in a gray uniform with glistening silver buttons, shining epaulets, lacquered boots and jingling spurs—a formidable personage to look at. The mere sight of him cowered the peasant. He lived in the city or town, and descended upon the village unexpectedly

at frequent intervals, more frequent than was good for the peace and comfort of the peasant. Between 1868 and 1874 when the office of the village mediators was suppressed, the *mir* was practically transferred to the absolute control of the *ispravnik*, and even after that he exercised a great deal of police authority over the village. During the period of his absolute rule his will was law, and since the *mouzhik* could not tell one day what the will of his highness would be the next, he was at a loss to know what was expected of him, yet he was held responsible for the fulfillment of this law. The communal elders were mere errand boys of the *ispravnik*—worse, mere juggling balls, which he could manipulate and toss about at will. He could indict, fine, abuse, imprison or punish them in whatever manner he pleased. There was only one way an individual or the *mir* could curry favor with the *ispravnik*, and that was by means of bribes—a language old Russian officialdom always heeded with alacrity.

Set over the *ispravnik* and the *stanovoi*, his assistant, was the governor of the province, the governor-general of the region embracing several provinces, and around them swarmed vast coteries of officials, directly and indirectly connecting them with the peasant. Though they but seldom had occasion to enter into personal relations with the latter, they nevertheless made themselves felt one way or an-

other, now through a special edict or special appeal, or special warning. In Siberia the high officials did come into close contact with the peasant settlers, only to defraud them of vast areas of land. In Ufa and Orenbourg alone between the years of 1873 and 1879 they robbed the peasant pioneers of five million acres of the best arable and timber land in those provinces.

More mischievous and degrading was the rule of the smaller officials, for unlike the higher, they sojourned with the peasant, met him often, watched over his conduct and therefore had more abundant opportunity to harass and plunder him. Some of the lower officials exercised but little authority, like the *starosta*, the village elder, and also the *starshina*, the district chief, both elected by the communes. They were merely the agents of their superiors. They did not even wear uniforms, and their duties were by no means manifold or exacting. This was especially true of the *starosta*, who had so little to do, that he kept up his work in the field like his neighbors. The *starshina* devoted all his time to his office. He was quite a personage and had better opportunity to exploit his office for selfish ends.

It was different with the *pisar*, the village clerk. His was a highly important position. He kept the records of the district administration, interpreted the law, and attended to the other affairs which re-

quired a knowledge of reading and writing. This very knowledge gave him a decided advantage not only over the ordinary peasant but even over the *starosta* and *starshina*, whose secretary he was, or was supposed to be. They were entirely helpless without his aid, especially if they happened to be illiterate, which was often the case.

The *pisar* was, as a rule, a man of little education. Graduates of the gymnasium or colleges were not eligible for the position of district clerk. Only those who had graduated from a primary school or had had a few years in the gymnasium were acceptable. They were less likely to engage in revolutionary activity. As a rule only the aggressive, self-seeking, unscrupulous type of petty semi-intellectual applied for this position; high-minded men shunned it, just as they shunned all positions under the command of the bureaucracy. The *pisar* looked upon his office solely as a means of self-aggrandizment, and he had abundant opportunity to subordinate his position to personal gain. If a peasant had to apply to the *pisar* to make a report in writing, or present a petition or to fill out a document, the *pisar* of course always expected "something," else he sulked, grumbled, said he was busy, and fidgetted about until he received a fee. If a peasant had to secure a passport, without which he could not travel, the *pisar* made him come again and again to the dis-

trict-office, which was often many miles from his home, unless the *mouzhik* was wise enough to bring a voluntary donation the first time he came. The *pisar* never missed an opportunity to extort bribes.

It remained, however, for the *uriadnik*—constable—to show to the peasant and the world how near an official can come to being an affliction. The *pisar* was at least somewhat refined, especially if given a generous gift. And at worst he had not the power to inflict personal injury upon a peasant. But the *uriadnik*—as a type he was blunt, callous, impudent, vile, rapacious. Himself an outcast of the intellectual professions or from the dregs of government servants in the towns, he neither understood nor cared to understand the wishes and needs of those he was supposed to serve. His one aim seemed to have been to instill terror in the minds of the villagers. He was Czar in his realm. His prerogatives were unlimited and his duties were manifold. He was chief of police, sanitary inspector, statistical agent, moral guardian and anything else he had a notion to be. If he was suddenly seized with a fancy to stop at a peasant hut on a cold winter day, go inside and throw the windows open, even though there was scarcely any fuel in the house, nobody could stop him; if he saw a calf or a pig in the house and wished to put it outdoors, even though there was no other warm place for the animals, and the peasant took

them into the house to save them from freezing, nobody dared to protest; if he saw a manure pile in the open court, and took a notion to go in and scold and shake the peasant by his shirt or beard, the peasant did not dare to resist. If he was shrewd he rolled a bundle of hay or a sack of oats into the *uriadnik's* cart, and then he could go on piling his manure all around the house as high as the roof, if he chose; if the *uriadnik* chose to break into a house without a warrant in the middle of the night, and make a search, it was quite lawful for him to do so; if he saw a wedding procession in the village, and did not particularly care for the songs, or the people, or cherished a personal grudge against the bride's or groom's father or mother, he could unceremoniously break up the procession and disperse the crowd; if he saw a peasant building a house and did not think that it met the specified requirements of the law, he could pull the entire structure down. He could even go into a house and scold and abuse the women, if the floor was not properly swept, or if the pots were not in the place he thought they ought to be, and the men, though they might be near, dared not rebuke him for his insolence. There was scarcely anything it was unlawful for him to do. And there was no form of redress against him. Complaints were useless, often quite injurious, and the government protected him in his practices, even to the point of prohibiting the

newspapers from printing accounts of outrages he perpetrated.

What a figure an *uriadnik* cut at the village fair! Dressed in his best—in summer a white military cap, white blouse, blue trousers tucked inside of shiny black boots with spurs, a lacquered leather belt at the waist and a scabbard dangling from his side, he strutted slowly, from path to path, booth to booth, everyone humbly tipping his hat and the women vendors smiling and nodding their heads at him. Now he stopped at this booth, now at that, picked up a piece of cake or candy and marched on, stopped somewhere else, helped himself once more to something and marched on again, and everywhere he went people paid him homage, as though he were some all-powerful being, whose good-will was indispensable to their very existence. And when there was a brawl or a fight—how all quieted down the moment he arrived on the scene, like a class of turbulent youngsters when the teacher comes into the room!

There was another official in the village of much higher rank than the *uriadnik* and with even greater powers of action. It was the *zemsky nachalnik*. He had entire jurisdiction over all rural institutions, administrative, executive, judiciary, and over all matters pertaining to the individual and collective affairs of the peasant. He could depose officials

elected by the *mir*, annul verdicts of the local courts and substitute his own; he might fine, arrest, punish transgressors of the law or violators of his will. If peasants ever showed a disposition to rebel against some landed proprietor, he had them flogged. He was recruited from the nobility, and quite naturally strove to protect the interests of his class. And like the other officials he never missed an opportunity to exploit his position for personal profit. If he had work to do on his estate, he just called on certain peasants and ordered them to report for duty. Of course he never paid them.

Such was the legal and social position of the peasant. He was isolated from other classes of society; he had to submit to the rule of the commune, and the commune had to submit to the rule of the bureaucracy and the dictates of a horde of unscrupulous officials. He was not free to go where he liked, or to do what he pleased. His opportunity for advancement was, therefore, sadly limited. He chafed under these limitations but he could not help himself. He had to acquiesce.

CHAPTER V

THE PEASANT AS A FARMER

It was bad enough for the Russian peasant to be kept in ignorance; it was worse still to be systematically discriminated against legally and socially; it was worst of all to be held in a state of perpetual poverty. From ignorance and social disability he might escape, but from the clutch of poverty he could not extricate himself. It held him firmly in its grasp and shaped his very flesh and spirit. And the government not only made no effort to remove or loosen this clutch, but strained its energies and ingenuity to tighten and deepen it.

Not that the government was actuated by a desire to see the peasant lacerated by material want. It hardly needs pointing out that it was decidedly to the government's advantage to promote not indigence but prosperity in the village. But the landlords dominated the government, and what they were interested in chiefly, was the preservation of their precious privileges, which, it must be remembered, were derived from their mastery over the peasant. Hence to protect these privileges after freedom was granted to the serfs, it was nec-

essary so to limit his opportunities for economic advancement that he would continue to be dependent upon his former masters. Consequently, the Emancipation Act left the peasant in a far worse condition materially, than he was under serfdom.

For then the landlord took good care of the peasant. He had to, if he had his own welfare at heart. It was to his advantage to feed the serf well, clothe him warmly, house him comfortably so that he would work better, produce more. The landlord allotted to each peasant an area of land large enough for him to raise all the food and the other things, like flax and wool, necessary for his existence. It was a hard life the serf lived; he had no individual freedom, no opportunity to develop his faculties, no other aim in life but that of the animal—to work, eat and sleep, and he was entirely at the mercy of his master. But he was never hungry.

With the coming of the emancipation, however, the personal interest of the landlord in the serf quite naturally disappeared. The landlord was now chiefly concerned with the preservation of his property-possessions. At one time there was even a movement among the landed nobles to prevent any allotment of land to the peasant after the emancipation. There were, however, other landlords who saw a menace in such a movement. They realized that freeing the peasant without giving

him a chance to earn at least part of his living from his own land, was like placing a stick of dynamite under their own houses. They argued that that would lead to bloody uprisings. But even these more practical nobles were loathe to lose substantial portions of their estates, and they fought in government committees against generous allotments to the peasant. They were stubbornly opposed to allowing the *mouzhik* to hold the share of land he had been tilling as a serf for his own use—a share which was only large enough to grow the necessaries of life. In other words, the landlords were opposed to providing the peasant with enough land for his livelihood, this despite the fact that they were to receive an exorbitant price for every span of ground the peasant was to acquire. And for a very good reason, as far as they were concerned. Now that they would no longer have slave labor, they would have to hire help to cultivate their estates, and the only help available was the freed serf. But if the latter had enough land to furnish him a living, he would not have much spare time to work outside, and he would not be likely to sell his services at too low a price. But if he were in a measure to depend for his livelihood upon outside labor, he would be glad to accept whatever wage was offered to him, and labor would be cheap.

The landlords had their wish fulfilled. The divi-

sion of land after the emancipation was effected in full accord with their interests; 481,000 peasants [1] received no land at all. They were chiefly the *dvorovye*—the domestic help of the landlords; 550,000 received less than one *dessyatin* (2.7 acres) per masculine soul. These were the so-called pauper's shares, allotted to those peasants who preferred to have small parcels and not pay any redemption fees, rather than to have larger ones and steep themselves in debt; 1,553,000 received less than two *dessyatins* per soul. In all, therefore, two and one-third million men-serfs, or 23.4 per cent of all that were registered on the estates of the landlords, received exceedingly small parcels of land or none at all. These peasants were from the very beginning of the emancipated era doomed to be proletarians.

Of the peasants who had received more substantial allotments, those that had lived on the estates of the nobles fared much worse than those who had been under the control of the imperial family and the state. The former had the best portions of the land they had tilled as serfs, especially pasture and forest, sliced off from the shares now trans-

[1] There were two classes of peasants, those who had been on the state lands and those who had been serfs on private estates. There were some minor differences in their status before the emancipation. After the emancipation these differences very largely disappeared.

ferred to their possession. This was especially the case in the southern and southwestern provinces, where the land was the best in Russia. In 21 out of 36 provinces the cuttings amounted to 26.2 per cent of the original holdings; in the black soil region these cuttings rose in places to 40 per cent. On the average each landlord's male serf received 3.2 *dessyatins;* each state peasant 6.7 *dessyatins;* each imperial peasant 4.9 *dessyatins,* giving an average of 4.8 *dessyatins* for each of all emancipated peasants.

Thus to begin with when the peasant was freed from serfdom he at best had less land than he required for the upholding not of a higher but of the same standard of living he had maintained during his period of servitude; and not only was his allotment of land smaller than it had been under serfdom, the soil was of poorer quality, the very best portions were cut off and joined to the estates of the landlords.

In subsequent years when with the increase in population followed divisions and subdivisions of land the holding of the individual *mouzhik* constantly diminished in size. In 1861 European Russia had a peasant population of 54,150,000 peasants. By 1916 it had almost doubled. During this period the land-holdings of the peasant fell from 4.9 *dessyatins* in 1861 to 3.3 *dessyatins* in 1880, to 2.6 *dessyatins* in 1900. Many peasants had lost

all their land. Either they had rented it away for long periods or else they withdrew from the *mir* entirely and devoted themselves to working for wages. According to A. Zolotareff, director of the Central Statistical Committee under the Ministry of Interior, there were in Russia in 1905, 2.2 million families who worked on land, but had no farms of their own. They constituted fifteen per cent of all who were engaged in agricultural pursuits.

In the same year in forty-seven provinces of European Russia out of the 11,956,876 peasant households, 23 per cent. had less than five *dessyatins* per household, and 70 per cent. had less than ten *dessyatins* per household, whereas according to the computation of government experts the average family required at least 12.5 *dessyatins* to provide it with adequate sustenance. In certain provinces the land shortage was particularly acute. Such were Kiev, Podolsk, Poltava, Kursk, Tulsk.

This insufficiency of land would not have been so widespread nor so poignant, if the surplus population of the village could have been absorbed by the cities and industrial centers. But Russia is woefully backward industrially, with comparatively few large cities and flourishing industrial centers. In western Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century with the growth of manufacturing, cities increased and multiplied rapidly. Even in semi-

feudal Austria the city population had increased from 19 per cent of the total in 1843, to 38 per cent in 1900, while in Russia it had grown from 10 per cent in 1863 to only 14 per cent in 1912. The following table shows how small the city population is in Russia compared to that of other countries. The figures are for the year 1912.

Name of country	*Per cent of city population*	*Per cent of rural population*
England	78	22
Germany	56	44
United States	42	59
Italy	26	74
Russia	14	86

According to N. P. Oganovsky, one of the most searching students of Russian agrarian problems, out of the annual increase of two million souls in rural Russia the cities absorbed only about 350,000. The remaining 1,650,000 had to remain in the village and struggle for a living by working on constantly diminishing shares of land or selling their labor to anyone willing to buy it, no matter how small the compensation.

But insufficiency of land and absence of city markets for all or even a large portion of the surplus peasant laborers, were not the only conditions which fostered material privation in rural Russia. Agricultural backwardness, was another factor that con-

tributed lavishly toward the destitution of the *mouzhik*. Small as was his parcel of land, by applying methods of intensive cultivation he could have substantially enlarged its fertility and drawn from the soil increased quantities of food, perhaps sufficient to provide him with ample nourishment. That would have surely been a happy escape from want, sorrow and agony. But considering the conditions under which the peasant lived, recourse to such an expedient was entirely out of the question.

To begin with the peasant to this day is ignorant of advanced methods of farming. It was in the scheme of the old order to devote the bulk of its resources and efforts to outward expansion rather than to inward development. Consequently the old government built few agricultural schools in Russia, few experiment stations, and provided few experts to advise and encourage the adoption of improved methods of tillage. The *zemstvos*, it is true, had of their own accord striven to supply the necessary knowledge to the *mouzhik*, but they lacked financial support and were constantly hampered in their activities, so that the result of their efforts is scarcely discernible. To this day the Russian peasant follows very largely the same methods of cultivation his ancestors had practiced generations before him. He inherits these just as he sometimes inherits his father's boots or sheepskin coat.

Moreover had he been the best informed man in the world as to modern ways of tilling the soil, he could not have put his knowledge into operation, because he had no capital, and without capital he could not buy plows, seeders, tractors, fertilizers and other necessary equipment. The government made no effort to provide cheap credit for farm-improvements.

Besides, under the best of circumstances and with the best of intentions the *mouzhik* had no incentive to improve his land. Owing to the community system of ownership prevalent among about three-quarters of the rural population in Russia, he could not claim the land as his own personal property. He was paying for it, but after all it was not his. It belonged to the commune, and every few years the commune reapportioned and redistributed the land within its limits in accordance with the newly created needs caused by increase in population. What was Ivan's this year, might be Stepan's the next, and vice versa. What object would there be for Ivan to invest capital, if he had it, and labor for the improvement of the fields he worked, if by the time he had improved them and was ready to reap the reward of his continued and painstaking labors, they might be transferred to his neighbor? Ivan's sole aim was to extract from the land all the wealth he could while he held it, and the next occupant had to shift

for himself as best he could. Such a process of cultivation was, of course, detrimental to the *mouzhik* as well as to the nation at large, for it only tended to exhaust the latent fertility of the soil and further to impoverish the tiller and the whole nation.

But even if the *mouzhik* had the incentive to improve his land, he could not do it advantageously under the communal system of ownership. He was in reality a slave of the commune, of its customs, traditions, institutions. Theoretically the *mir* strove to mete out equality to every one of its members, and it surely was equality with a vengeance! It did not parcel out a contiguous plot of land to the occupant to work it as best he could and wished. It assigned to each menber a corresponding share in all of the tracts in its possession. Thus if there was a strip of swamp in the commune, every *mouzhik* had a share in it; if there was a sandy field, a stretch of loam, an upland, a lowland, rough, smooth, or level land, every one received his due portion in each segment, so that in the aggregate he had a little bit of everything and not much of anything, like a diner in an American plan hotel. If the land was more or less uniform in quality, it was usually divided into three parts based upon the three-field system of cultivation in vogue in Russia, and each resident or rather member received his due share in each part. Moreover, everybody in the village had to work his

land about the same time, so as to release or block the roadways, whichever was desired, and to throw open or shut stubble and other fields for the pasturing of cattle or horses. Thus everybody in the *mir* sowed rye in the same field, wheat in the same field, flax in the same field and at the same time. One did as the other, and all did alike, to the detriment of each and all. That was the law of the *mir*, as irrevocable as the law of gravitation.

Nor was this all. The land in Russia runs in long strips. In the case of the peasant each strip is very narrow, anywhere between two and ten yards in width, and since the strips do not all lie together, but are distributed over different sections, as many sections as there are types of soil, the peasant had to lug all of his tools from one field to another, and journey back and forth often with horse and wagon whenever this or that crop demanded attention, thus losing a prodigious amount of his own and his horse's time. The strips are also separated from one another by dead furrows or ridges, which in the aggregate make up thousands of *dessyatins* of fertile soil that raise nothing but weeds, which spread freely to nearby fields, contaminate and often ruin crops.

Viewed from whichever viewpoint one chooses the communal form of land-ownership in the Russian village, in the form in which it had developed,

has been a decided drawback to the *mouzhik*, and has contributed substantially toward his economic ruin. The manner of ownership, the lay of the land, the three-field system — that is one field for winter crops, one for spring crops and one lying fallow —all of these have tended to promote inefficiency, extravagance and waste. And the old government did nothing to guide and help the *mouzhik* to overcome these obstacles to successful farming. True, in 1906 Stolypin endeavored to break up communal land ownership, and to establish homesteads, but his motive was so treacherous, his method so crude, his economic aid so insignificant, that, as we shall see later, his scheme proved an abject failure.

Nor do we get a cheerful picture of things when we examine into the methods of work the peasant pursues in the tillage of the land. These methods are medieval. Western countries have long ago forgotten what they were, but they still prevail in Russia on a very extensive scale, partly because the *mouzhik* is ignorant, but chiefly because he is too poor to substitue for them newer, easier, more efficient methods. For one thing the *mouzhik* is not at all particular about the quality of the seed he uses. There may be weeds in his rye, all kinds of pernicious weeds, yet he does not clean them out, because, as a rule, he does not know how. The seed may be unripe, shrunken, hardly fit to put into the soil, but he

does put it in. He has to, if it is the best he has raised. Nobody will give him any better, and he cannot afford to buy any. Then, too, with very few exceptions he does not sow with a machine, but by hand, from a crib slung over his neck or from an apron tied round his waist. He scatters the seed over the surface of the field, and when crows come, and they are never tardy in coming, they pick up a good share of it, and when the wind blows, it sweeps a good deal of the seed into furrows, ridges or neighboring fields.

Nor does the peasant fertilize his land at all adequately. In 1916 according to the report of the League of Agrarian Reforms the peasants had put on their fields 22,763.4 million pouds of stable manure. It takes 2,400 pouds to a *dessyatin*, if it is scattered at all properly. This means that if the above quantity of manure had been distributed adequately, it would have fertilized only 9,500 *dessyatins*, whereas the area of land seeded in 1916 was over 64 million *dessyatins*. The shortage of manure comes from a shortage of both stock and straw. In the black soil region alone, according to Maslov, there is a shortage of ten million heads of cattle and eight and a half million heads of horses. As far as straw is concerned in the provinces, where there is little or no forest, the *mouzhik* has to use it for fuel, and what he has left he puts into his garden, for a good garden he

must have above everything else. In some places the peasant sweeps the streets in the summer, and uses the sweepings for fertilizer. But the amount gathered in this manner is quite insignificant.

In western countries the lack of stable manure is made up by the plentiful use of commercial fertilizer. But in Russia, especially among the peasants, such fertilizer is scarcely known. During the last years the import of it has gradually risen from 12 million pouds in 1909 to 27 million pouds in 1914. But even that is like a drop in the bucket.

Fully as lamentable is the peasant's lot as far as technical equipment is concerned. To this day in most instances he has no adequate implements with which to work his land. According to the report of the Central Statistical Committee, fully half of the tools the peasant used in 1910 were of ancient make. Only about 52 per cent had plows of a modern type—light ones—that do not descend deep into the ground; 43 per cent used *sokhas*—crude plows of wooden frames and iron points; 25 per cent pulverized their fields with wooden harrows—wooden pecks and wooden frames; 70 per cent had wooden-framed but iron-pecked harrows; only 5 per cent could boast of modern drags. Disks such as the American farmer uses universally, are practically unknown in the Russian village.

Not only does the *mouzhik* possess inadequate and

insufficient implements, in most instances he has not the power necessary to put to creditable operation the crude and lumbering machinery he does possess. Engines are entirely unknown, excepting on the big landed estates of the nobility, and among the very wealthy peasants. And the scarcity of horses is appalling! In 1912, 31.5 per cent of the peasant householders had no horses at all; 32.1 per cent had only one horse per household; 22.2 per cent owned two horses per household, and only 14.2 per cent could pride themselves on possessing three or more horses.

And what horses they are! The type is perhaps the most inferior in Europe—short, light, scrawny, quite incapable of arduous labor. And no wonder, for the most part they are not fed properly or sufficiently. In summer they are turned on grass, as soon as it sprouts out of the ground—an extremely poor diet for a work horse, making him "soft," flabby, inducing profuse perspiration, short-windedness, and rendering him susceptible to illness. The American farmer will seldom allow a work horse to touch grass during the working seasons of the year. In spring and at other occasions, when the work on the farm is particularly strenuous, the *mouzhik* feeds his horse a portion of grain, about three or four quarts a day—if he has any saved up. On the whole the peasant raises little oats; lucky, indeed, is the *mouzhik* who has an abundance

of such fodder! Many a one is obliged to sell his horse in the fall or give it away for the winter just for the feeding. In many sections colts are killed by the thousands to save them from starvation. I shall never forget the scenes I witnessed in our village in autumn, after the pastures froze, when peasant after peasant led his prancing colt to the woods, and killed it there, leaving the carcass on the ground for dogs and wolves to fight over. I remember with what dismay and chagrin we boys talked about this "cruelty" of our fathers, and many a time we asked them why they killed "our" colts—those playful, timid creatures we loved so much. But they only grunted a rebuke in reply. To ourselves we vowed that when we grew up, we should never do such a horrid thing. And yet—many of us have not kept that vow.

How then can a *mouzhik* work his field, if he has no horses at all, or if he has only one horse, which was, as we have seen, the condition of about two-thirds of the peasantry in 1912? They do the best they can. If a *mouzhik* has no horse of his own, he has to hire one, which is rather expensive, and often exasperatingly inconvenient, for no horse can be hired, unless the owner has first attended to his own crops. This means that the peasant who depends upon hired horse-labor, is often late in putting in his seed and gathering his harvests. Besides, with one horse and

a poor one at that, which is usually the case, it is impossible to do justice to the soil. Deep plowing is out of the question. At best one can roll over about four or five inches of soil, thus stirring only the upper layer, and depending, therefore, for a crop upon the sustenance the plants derive from this layer—shallow as it is. If rain happens to be abundant in summer, there is usually plenty of moisture in the upper plowed roll of the soil. But if rains are scarce during the growing season, the water that has soaked in during the spring, soon dries out: the soil where it is clay cracks; plants wilt and crops burn.

In southern Russia the peasant who has no horse of his own and is too poor or else cannot find one to hire, sows his crops *navolokom*, on the stubble, and drags it in with a cow. If the land was well plowed the year before, he is likely to reap a fair harvest. But as a rule, the peasant never plows his fields well, because of defective plows and consequently the *mouzhik* who sows on stubble, seldom reaps a substantial harvest. In fact in most cases the yield is actually less than the amount of seed used. And the result is detrimental in a double way: it diminishes the amount of food for stock, which leads to a reduction of the quantity of stock, and with a lessening of the animal power at his command, the *mouzhik* is obliged to resort to sowing on stubble more and more. If he has no stubble land of his own,

he exchanges for it a strip of good pasture or fallow land, for sow he must, somehow, somewhere.

Because of all the conditions stated above, the peasant is wholly dependent for his crop upon atmospheric conditions. He cannot combat a drouth, he cannot control a flood, he is helpless against a storm. An unexpected and unfavorable natural phenomenon plays havoc with his crops. More than any other tiller of the soil in Europe is he the slave and not the master of natural forces.

He harvests his crops very largely in the awkward and wasteful manner in which he sows them. He has few mowing machines, few horse-rakes, no tedders, scarcely any stacking apparatus, or horse-forks, such as the American farmer possesses. He usually cuts his hay with a straight and not an arched-handled scythe; rakes it by hand with a wooden rake, loads and unloads it by hand with a long wooden fork; he reaps his grain mostly with a sickle, thrashes it with a flail; now and then he buys a thrashing machine in partnership with neighbors, but this machine, driven in most cases by horse-power, does not clean the thrashings: winnowing machines are rare, and the cleaning is done by hand. The peasant gathers his thrashed product into a pile at one end of his barn, sweeps clean the barn floor, gets down on his knees with a small wooden scoop in his hand, dips the scoop into the pile, and flings the contents vig-

orously to the other end of the floor—the chaff and straw being light fall to the ground nearby and thus separate from the grain. It is a clumsy, wasteful process, but in most cases it is the best the peasant can do.

Considering the conditions under which the peasant is compelled to labor it is not at all surprising that compared with other countries his harvests are very poor. In the United States the farmer has made such remarkable progress in the adoption of methods which enable him to harness the forces of nature to his interests, that during the past fifty years his yields per acre have doubled, whereas in the case of the Russian peasant they have fallen off substantially. The following table shows the pathetic condition of the Russian farmer compared with that of the farmer in many other countries, as far as crops are concerned. The average yield per hectare [1] for all grains in the countries named below is:

	Quintals [2]		*Quintals*
Belgium	21.1	Uruguay	12.4
England	20.2	British India	12.1
Norway	19.7	Spain	11.8
Japan	19.0	Austria	11.4
Holland	18.7	Rumania	10.5
Denmark	18.1	Bulgaria	9.5
Germany	16.8	Italy	9.4

[1] Hectare—2.471 acres.

[2] Quintal—100 Kms. or 220.46 lbs.

	Quintals		*Quintals*
Sweden	15.6	Australia	8.3
Argentine	14.5	Algiers	8.2
Canada	14.3	Serbia	8.2
United States	13.6	RUSSIA	6.4
Hungary	13.6		
France	13.2		
Greece	12.8		

Out of twenty-five agricultural countries Russia produces less per unit of area than any other!

Such is the lot of the Russian peasant as a farmer. To some extent his condition has been improved through the efforts of the coöperatives and the *zemstvos*. But in the vast majority of cases he is ignorant of the contributions of science, is enslaved to the deadening traditions of the *mir*, has little land, lacks machinery, lacks horses. No wonder that year after in Russia, perhaps the richest agricultural country in the world, millions of industrious farmers have had to face starvation.

CHAPTER VI

TAXATION

The peasant had to pay all kinds of taxes, direct and indirect. He had to pay a poll-tax, which had existed since the day of Peter the Great, a state tax, a *zemstvo* tax, a local community tax, and, chief of all, the redemption fee. This fee was to compensate the landlords for the land they had lost in the allotments that had been made to the peasant. But the value of the land under consideration, appraised at the then prevailing market price, was 689,000,000 roubles, whereas the price fixed by the emancipators was 923,300,000 roubles, a difference of nearly a third of one billion roubles, which constituted nothing else than a ransom the peasant was obliged to pay for the deliverance of his person. As V. A. Lossitzky expressed it, "The peasant population was forced to redeem not only its soil, but also its own personality; it had to pay the price of its souls." As a matter of fact it paid more than that. The government, as is well known, collected the redemption fee, and it made the peasant stand the entire cost of the transaction, and in addition it received from him big sums in interest and in fines for de-

layed payments. In all the peasant paid for the land 1,390,000,000 roubles, or just about twice what it was actually worth at the time it was sold, and then it must be remembered that owing to the revolution of 1905 the government was compelled to cancel further payments, so that the peasant paid less than the government had planned to extort from him.

As far as the peasant was concerned, he regarded the redemption fee as an absolute injustice. He was sure he would receive the land free, and he did not understand why he should be made to pay for it. He had lived on it since days immemorial and had always worked it. He felt it was his by all the rights of possession. In places he rebelled against the proposed fee to the landlords, but in the end he had to acquiesce in the arrangement, with the result that a few years after the emancipation he found himself in a peculiarly difficult position, drawing nearer and nearer to the line of starvation. In 1877 Professor J. E. Janson of Petrograd University pointed out the fact, much to the astonishment of intellectual Russia, that the taxes the peasant had to pay exceeded the net income he derived from his land. In 1872 the former state peasants of the province of Novgorod paid in taxes the entire net income they derived from the sale of their farm produce, whereas the serfs paid between 61 and 456 per cent above

their net income. In the government of Petrograd the tax exceeded the net income by 34 per cent; in Moscow by 105, in the black soil region from 24 to 200 per cent for former serfs and from 30 to 148 per cent for state peasants. In other provinces the difference between tax and net income was equally high, as indicated in the following table:

EXCESS OF TAX ABOVE NET INCOME

	Percentage for state peasants	*For serfs*
Tver	144	152
Smolensk	66	120
Kostroma	46	140
Pskov	30	113
Vladimir	68	176
Vyatka	3	100

In every case, it is to be noted, the former serfs were the heaviest sufferers, principally because they paid correspondingly higher indemnity fees than had the state peasants and had received smaller allotments of land.

Since this was the situation it would have been of decided advantage to the peasant to abandon his land entirely and become a wage laborer. He would then have been freed of the necessity of paying a redemption fee, and could have enjoyed the full amount of his earnings minus certain small taxes. Many a peasant would no doubt have been glad to flee from the land, but he was anchored to it by

various legal and social restrictions. If he was in arrears he could not get a passport, and without a passport he could not travel far from his home in search of work, and it was not always easy to find a suitable and well-paying job in the vicinity of one's home. Then, too, if he renounced his right of locomotion his personal property was disposed of at public auction, and he was reduced practically to a state of pauperism. Moreover, since the *mir* was collectively responsible for the tax of each individual, it was not likely to allow him freely to slip out and shift his burden upon its already heavily laden shoulders. And besides, there were the officials, with rods in hand, empowered and ever ready literally to flog the taxes out of a delinquent peasant. Try as best he might he could not escape the financial burden that was thrust upon him.

It may be asked how could the peasant exist at all, if he was obliged to turn over to the state treasury more than was his net yield from the land, sometimes twice as much? Of course it was difficult and would have actually been impossible, if the land had not been rising in value, and if he had not supplemented his meager income from his farm with earnings derived from wage labor and the home manufacture of various articles for the market. And when these supplementary earnings did not suffice to make both ends meet, the peasant felt obliged to "eat" his

capital, that is, to sell his cow or horse, or else to borrow money from usurers. But more of this later.

As far as the government was concerned it could not remain indifferent to the constantly growing impoverishment of the peasant. Something had to be done to keep him from sinking into a state of pauperism. Accordingly upon the initiative of the somewhat liberal minister Bunge, the excessively heavy redemption fee was slightly reduced in amount and the antiquated poll-tax was entirely abolished. That helped the peasant somewhat, but it created a deficit in the national budget, much to the discomfiture of the minister of finance. Thereupon the successor of Bunge, Vyshnegradsky, while realizing the impossibility of restoring the direct tax to its former level, resolved to replete the state coffers with an indirect tax on the necessaries of life. The scheme worked magnificently as far as the minister's aim was concerned. Between the years of 1885–1895 the minister of finance collected through the indirect tax six times the amount the government had lost through the reduction of the direct tax.

Count Witte, who succeeded Vyshnegradsky, saw still greater possibilities in the indirect tax. He was by far the most energetic and resourceful man that ever held a portfolio in the cabinet of the last Czar. He wished to modernize Russia economically, to introduce the gold standard, to extend the railway

system, to stimulate the growth of industrialism, all of which required huge sums of money, and to obtain this money he unceremoniously increased the tariff on articles of common use in the village. In 1902 the tax on tea was three times as high as it had been in 1880, on sugar five times as high, on petroleum four, on cotton six, on copper and iron about the same as on cotton.

This greatly diminished the purchasing power of the peasant. He was not only prevented from raising his standard of living, he was in many instances actually obliged to lower it. Sugar had always been a luxury to him. Now it was even more so. The same was true of tea. Cotton, the only cheap goods a peasant could buy, now leaped so high in price that for a while it was beyond his reach. This worked a particular hardship on the women in the village, for they were the chief consumers of cotton cloth. It was even worse with iron. Any farmer or homeowner knows what an absolute necessity iron products are in the making and mending of agricultural implements, and the building and repairing of houses and barns. The peasant had to contrive to get along without the amount of iron he required for these purposes. He used very little of it on his buildings, with the result that something was constantly coming down, or breaking loose, and required repairs. His wagons he made almost entirely of wood, even

the bolts. Of course, such wagons could not carry big loads, especially on the rough muddy Russian roads, and they wore out quickly. And as for agricultural implements we have seen in the previous chapter how large a part wood plays in their manufacture.

Witte went a step further. He made the sale of vodka a government monopoly, and thus committed the state to the operation of an institution that did so much to degrade the peasant and further to aggravate his economic misery. But Witte raised a big revenue, the amount drawn from the monopoly of liquor alone soon reached the stupendous sum of one-third of the total of the national revenue, and most of this one-third came from the peasant. However, with the increasing misery of the peasant and the frequent occurrence of famine, millions of this revenue had to be diverted to feeding the starving population.

Such a system of taxation slowly devoured the possessions of the peasant. But there was a limit to the property he could dispose of, and still be in a position to carry on his household activities. He clung desperately to his last horse and his last cow, as one would cling to something upon which his very life depends. Consequently, when the taxpayer came around, and he had no funds of his own, and he felt that he could not part with any more of his per-

sonal property, he resorted to the expedient of borrowing money, and since, until the coming of the coöperatives, there was no bank in the village or any other agency to advance loans upon moderate terms, he had to apply for the favor to the rich peasant or to the landlord, or to the middleman, neither of whom engaged in money-lending for the sake of the love of his destitute neighbor. These money-lenders always sought to whip out all the profit they could from their clients, and they were not particularly regardful of the method they employed to attain their end.

Of the three types of money-lenders the landlords, it must be stated, were the least exacting, and that by no means signifies that they were liberal; the wealthy peasant was the most grasping, and the middleman was not always inferior to him in practices of dishonesty and cruelty. As far as the landlord was concerned there was always a certain formality and an outward gentility about him, but one can think of no redeeming traits in the *kulack*—literally fist, as the peasant loanmonger was called. Every village had its *kulacks*. They were ordinary peasants who by a streak of good luck or through superior ability rose to a position of affluence, and their only aim in life was to hoard up wealth by whatever means possible. They usually fixed their own terms—interest of twenty, fifty or one hundred per

cent was by no means rare—and the borrower had to accept them, however extortionate they might be, for he had to pay his taxes or else be sold out and punished.

It would take many pages to narrate how the *kulack* plied his ignominious trade, and how he ravaged the poor population in the village. Perhaps it can best be done by citing a concrete instance. We had a *kulack* in a neighboring village. Michael was his name, a tall, gaunt, pale-faced peasant with a long russet beard, a heavy nose and prominent cheek bones. He was the richest man in the village,—at least rumor had it so, though one could not tell it from the way he lived. His house looked shabby, and the interior was as ugly and filthy as that of the ordinary peasant. His sheep-skin coat was greasy, and he wore *lapti*—bast-shoes. Neither his wife nor his children seemed in any way to indicate that they were members of an affluent family. In summer they walked bare-footed, like the other peasants, and their Sunday clothes were neither more gaudy, nor better made, nor of a quality superior to those of their neighbors. And that was rather characteristic of the *kulack* as a type—he never flaunted his wealth, not even to the point of visibly raising his standard of living. Often he was nothing more than a miser.

When tax-paying time came our poorer peasants

applied to Michael for loans. They preferred Michael to the Polish landlord, because they knew him, they could talk things out freely with him in the presence of neighbors, and they did not have to bother signing so many incomprehensible documents. In fact they preferred Michael even to the middleman, who in competition with Michael often advanced loans on more moderate terms. Michael gave them the money, and they agreed to return it sometimes in cash, but usually in grain or in labor on his land, which he had rented from some of his debtors and from the nearby landlord. If the borrower agreed to pay in labor the wage-rate was fixed at the time the loan was made, and decidedly to Michael's advantage. If the borrower complained that wages were sure to be higher all over the neighborhood, Michael endeavored to argue him out of his assurance, and if he failed in that he told him to go and search for the accommodation elsewhere. If the debt was to be paid in grain, Michael agreed to accept it at the current market value, minus the cost of transportation to the city-mill, but when fall came and the grain was brought to him, he usually managed to cut off five or even ten kopecks on the poud from the prevailing market price. And then Michael weighed the grain on his own scales, and many a peasant expressed suspicion—of the scales! All around, the borrower was at the mercy of the *kulack*. It was the same with

the middleman. He, too, sought to take all the advantage he could of his patrons. And it was dangerous for any *mouzhik* to rouse the ill-will of the *kulack* or the middleman. Both shrewd, cunning, experienced, had a thousand ways of wreaking vengeance upon an enemy.

Thus we see that credit in the village was entirely in the hands of extortionists. Now and then there was a truly honest and charitable peasant or landlord who offered a loan to the *mouzhik* upon reasonable terms, or charged no interest at all. But such kind souls were as rare as honest officials. Since about 1908 the credit coöperatives greatly remedied the situation by enabling their members to obtain loans on moderate terms.

Yet despite the hardships and evils entailed in borrowing money, the peasant persisted in contracting loans. He had to. When the tax-collector rapped at his door, and he had no funds of his own, he had to obtain them somewhere. He borrowed right and left. He often borrowed, when he had everything mortgaged—horse, cow, next year's crop, even his own labor. The tax had to be paid. Even if he was in a position, when he no longer worked his land, having rented it away for years in advance in payment of loans already made, he was still responsible for his share of the tax. And the *chinovniks* showed no mercy. They did all they could to wring the tax

from him. They flogged or jailed him, or hired him out to earn his tax, or auctioned off his personal effects and left him entirely destitute. They left no stone unturned and no torture within the limit of their powers untried, in an effort to whip out of him his debt to the state.

But when he was stripped of everything, when he had sold everything he could, mortgaged everything he had left, and still lacked the sum required of him, his tax remained unpaid. No law, no threat, no torture, could squeeze it out of him, when he was prostrate and starving. The result was that arrears in taxes continued to accumulate with ever-increasing regularity. In the nineties only in a few counties in the Samara government, the officials had requisitioned peasant property to the amount of nine million roubles to liquidate arrears in taxes. Yet in 1892 in these same counties the arrears constituted 71.9 per cent of the sum owed to the government. In certain provinces taxes had remained unpaid for five years. According to Milyukov in the period of 1871-80 the arrears in taxes on every *dessyatin* of land the peasant held, averaged nineteen cents; in the period of 1881-90, they rose to twenty-four cents; in that of 1891-1900—to fifty-four cents, thus showing a progressive increase in debt. Alexinsky has shown this increase in the table at top of page 105.

	Percentage of entire amount in arrears
1871–75	22
1881–85	30
1886–90	42
1891–95	45

Such a condition of indebtedness reacted disastrously upon the personal ambition of the peasant and his powers of initiative. This is graphically described by Bekhtayev, himself a landlord. In speaking of the peasant of the central provinces, he says:

"A further diminution of the property of the peasants in the central provinces would hardly seem possible, because nothing is left that can be sold (by the authorities to pay the arrears). Thus the peasant's contribution to the exchequer has decreased not by law but by force of circumstances. The peasants pay now only what they can, not what they ought to; for the whole amount of the tax can in no way be collected. The worst of it is, that being insolvent the peasants are anxious not to save anything that may be sold for taxes. This hopeless state of poverty, unavoidable and unalterable, takes away every wish to save or to raise the standard of living, even if a possibility presented itself. The practical sense of the peasants permits them to improve nothing but the buildings, because these, whether they are good or poor, cannot be sold for arrears. And so the peas-

ants do not strive to earn money for any other purpose of private economy, and if they acquire some they very sensibly prefer to squander it, rather than to hand it over to the collectors."

That some of the government economists realized the destructiveness of the prevalent form of taxation, is evidenced in the following report made in 1903 by Schwaneback, a member of the commission under Minister of Finance Kokovtsev, that was delegated by the Czar to make an inquiry into the cause of the indigence of the rural population.

"As a result of the overtaxation of the last decade from the nine central and eastern provinces of Russia the exchequer received only 407 million roubles, instead of the full amount of 450 millions. These arrears made up more than fifteen per cent of the assessed sum. It is evident that the population was actually unable to pay more than it really did. In fact they did not even pay this sum, because at the very time the government was obliged to spend 203 millions for feeding the same population. Thus the exchequer was able to keep only half of what it was paid, and its real loss was 44 per cent of the amount assessed. The overcharge in taxation is evidently aimless, and it would be better to leave the money with the population."

Only in 1905 owing to the outbreak of revolution was the direct tax of the peasant considerably re-

duced by the cancellation of further payments of the redemption fee. But this cancellation was like the favor of a man who gives with one hand and robs with the other. It was made up largely in further increases of the indirect tax, which in 1914 constituted 60 per cent of the total national revenue.

Thus we see what a trial it was for the peasant to keep up the payment of taxes. It would seem almost as though he were created for the sole purpose of working and saving and suffering in order to keep up the flow of gold into the state coffers. No wonder that he grew to look upon the payment of taxes as upon a sort of torture chamber—to be destroyed at the earliest opportunity. When the Czar was overthrown, and he felt that the new government was physically impotent, lacking powers of coercion, he stopped in many places to pay taxes. It seemed to make no difference to him that the new government was something different from Czarism, was of great promise to Russia, and, therefore to him. He had suffered so much because of the taxes that had been exacted from him in the past, that he seemed determined to put an end to their continued payment.

CHAPTER VII

HOME INDUSTRIES AND WAGE-LABOR

Considering the smallness of the income the peasant derived from his land and the exorbitant taxes he was obliged to pay, it would have been utterly impossible for him to maintain himself alive, despite the rising value of his land if he had had no opportunity to augment his earnings through other forms of employment. As a matter of fact he was always searching for such employment. He was not exacting as to the conditions of labor or compensation. He could scarcely afford to be, for he had to keep himself occupied all the time at something that yielded an income, no matter how small. It was a matter of self-preservation with him.

What were the forms of employment open to him aside from his work on his own land?

First there were the so-called home industries, in which he produced for the market flax, linen, pottery, tubs, troughs, pails, barrels, axe-handles, baskets, chairs, sleds, wagons and a variety of other things. The Russian peasant is, as a rule, a skilled artisan, the men excel in carpentering and the women in fancy embroideries. Because of the industrial

backwardness of the country, there was considerable demand for home manufactures of various kinds.

The conditions under which the peasant carried on these industries were conducive neither to good health nor to large productivity. He worked in his home, usually during the winter months only, and we already know what an unsanitary place the peasant home is, especially during the cold weather, when the windows are sealed hermetically. He had only the crudest of tools to work with. He made slow progress, but he kept assiduously at his task, working long hours, twelve, fourteen, sixteen a day, his wife and children helping him. It was a sweatshop industry in the fullest sense of the word.

The earnings for such labor were quite low. It could hardly be otherwise in the absence of organized markets, good highways, adequate transportation facilities and in the presence of widespread competition. The buyers were sometimes neighbors, sometimes middlemen. The latter missed no opportunity to drive a shrewd bargain. If the peasant was hard pressed for funds, and needed money in advance, he had to accept whatever the middleman offered him for his wares. In later years, however, the *zemstvos* and more recently the coöperatives, have sought to combat this evil by providing facilities to reach a good market and to purchase raw materials without the aid of the middleman.

The coming of factories further lowered the remuneration of the peasant for work done at his home bench in the case of many articles, such as dry goods and furniture, for example. A peasant woman could not weave on her lumbering loom as cheaply as could a German machine in a shop. A man could not make a chair as cheaply as could the factory, when he had to do all his work by hand from cutting down the tree to varnishing and polishing the finished product. The same was true of many other articles. At a conference of traders in home manufactures Lycenko, one of the delegates, stated that owing to factory competition the value of the work of a woman at the spinning board had shrunk to five kopecks a day. Only wares which had a purely artistic appeal, such as fancy pottery and embroideries commanded substantial prices. But such wares had a very limited market. Yet despite the low price, the *mouzhik* continued to manufacture articles in his home. It afforded some compensation, and that was better than nothing. Only in the so-called commercial province has the peasant been able to derive a substantial income from his home-made products.

Another form of employment which constituted a source of income to the peasant, was agricultural labor. The landlords had their big estates to take care of. They could not possibly do it with their own labor, even if they had tried—which they never had—

because of the feudal notion of the incompatibility of manual labor with the dignity of a gentleman. They had to hire all their workers from plowman to stable-boy. This afforded numerous jobs for the peasant, who hired out to the landlords by the year, by the season, but mostly by the day. Opportunity for such labor varied with different sections. In some it was greater than in others. A good deal depended upon the condition of the crop—the better it was, the greater the demand for help on the estates. In some places a peasant could find abundant work near his home, in others he had to travel a considerable distance to find a market for his labor. In the thickly populated black earth region or in other provinces, where the peasant had little land and large families he journeyed in search of work to the more sparsely settled border provinces.

This journey usually began in spring before the frost was quite out of the ground. Men, women, boys and girls, formed into parties, and journeyed together. They seldom rode on boats or trains, even if they lived in a region where such conveyances had already come into existence. They walked, mostly barefooted, so as to save their shoes, many with stout canes in their hands and heavy packs slung over their backs. When the weather was good and the roads dry, the journey was quite tolerable, even though the feet of the pedestrians ached from cuts and blis-

ters. But when heavy rains came, they had to wade through pools of slush often knee-deep, their clothes soaked in rain and mud, their bodies drenched with sweat.

They took little money with them. Some had none to take. They lived chiefly on dried bread, which they carried with them from home. Those who had cash stopped now and then at some inn and enjoyed a sumptuous meal—of *shtchui* (vegetable soup), bread and tea. Others begged for food, when their provisions ran low, and still others helped themselves, whenever the helping seemed safe. No wonder that during the period this migration continued, the authorities in many villages through which it passed, found it necessary to double their guards.

The journey to the border provinces lasted anywhere between three days to half a month, sometimes a whole month, depending upon where the laborer was from, and where he was going. No matter how keen his privations and discomforts while on the road, he did not, as a rule, turn back, unless smitten with rheumatism or some other serious ailment. Upon arrival at his destination he searched for the buyer of his "goods." Sometimes the buyer was a representative of the landlord, sometimes he was an employment agent or a contractor, who had undertaken to do certain jobs on various estates.

Invariably the employment agent or the contractor took advantage of the ignorance, credulity, and defencelessness, of the *mouzhik*, and lured him into fraudulent bargains. It was not so bad with the representative of the landlord, who had no personal axe to grind. During the period that the immigrant laborer was waiting for the buyer to take him to his work-place, he lived outdoors in the market place. If it rained he sneaked for shelter into some woodshed or barn.

The treatment he was accorded on the estate varied with different landlords. He worked long hours, fourteen and sixteen a day, and the foreman or manager came round quite often to prod him on with loud words or choice epithets. German foremen, of whom there were very many on Russian estates, gained a particularly notorious reputation for their meanness to hired help. On estates that were prosperous the peasant laborer received fairly good food. There were exceptions, of course. On the farms, where the owner was in straitened circumstances or where the crop happened to be poor, the table fare was pitiful, so much so, that many a laborer, by no means used to luxurious dishes, felt constrained to leave before his term of service had expired even at the risk of forfeiting what wages the landlord owed him. Often a landlord intentionally placed poor food before the hired *mouzhik*, or resorted to some

other petty method of exasperating him, so as to drive him into quitting his job and thus making him forfeit his earnings. The worst aspect of the hired man's life on the estate was his lodging place. He had to stay in a barn, shed, in some yard or orchard. Wherever a landlord had a special living place for his hired help, it was usually a barracks with no windows, no furniture and no furnishings, excepting straw on the floor on which the laborer slept in his clothes. Men and women often lodged in the same barracks.

As far as the law was concerned, in regulating the relations between the landlord and hired help, it considered the former the weaker party needing support and protection. According to the rules of 1863 regulating the relations between landlord and hired man, the landlord had a right to collect a fine from his workingman for voluntary absence from work, either because of laziness or drunkenness. The amount of the fine was usually fixed beforehand in the contract. If, however, the contract did not provide for it, the amount collected as a fine was twice the daily wage of the delinquent worker for each day he was off duty. The landlord also had a right to discharge the worker, if he found him rude or impudent to any member of his family, or to any of the managers or foremen on the estate.

These rules, however, did not seem to satisfy the

landlords. They complained that the *mouzhik* was spoiled, that he loafed too much, absented himself too often from work, recklessly violated contracts, and that they were helpless in combating his bad habits with the limited power the law had bestowed upon them. They clamored for increased authority to deal with the delinquent *mouzhik*. Here and there was a landlord who told complaining colleagues, that they themselves were largely to blame for the unsatisfactory labor conditions that prevailed on the big estates. He pointed out the fact that in their effort to obtain cheap help they took unjust advantage of the *mouzhik* by advancing to him a certain sum of money, when he was hard pressed for funds, and making him sign the kind of a labor contract they wished—a contract which the *mouzhik* could not be expected faithfully to fulfill. He also pointed out that many landlords were in the habit of not paying their men when they agreed to, that some held wages back for months and even for a year, and that others paid in checks, which could be immediately converted into ready money only upon the payment of a fee to the middleman. Further, he chided the landlords for their maltreatment of the worker, for feeding him poorly, beating him, insulting him, and doing nothing to make him feel comfortable during his leisure hours.

These criticisms, however, had no effect upon the

demands of the big body of landlords for further and more rigorous measures to control the *mouzhik* laborer. In their list of recommendations to the government they even urged the reintroduction of corporal punishment. The result of their efforts was the promulgation of the new rules of 1886, which were supposed to be amendments to the regulations issued in 1863, but which were in reality a subversion of those rules. For rudeness to members of the landlord's family or to managers, the landlord now had the right to discharge a worker, whereas a laborer no longer possessed the right to withdraw from a contract if he was insulted or beaten. The landlord was no longer under the obligation to apply to the Justice of Peace to have a fine imposed upon a worker. He could levy his own fine. If a worker violated his agreement, he was liable to criminal prosecution, but if a landlord broke his, the law did not regard it as a criminal misdemeanor. If a worker deserted the estate, the landlord could call upon the police to locate him and bring him back by force. If a worker felt outraged against the treatment of the landlord, he had a right to sue the latter, but not in the peasant court, and if through ignorance he ever did file a charge against a landlord in such a court, the landlord quite naturally ignored the summons and with impunity. To sue a landlord in a higher (*zemsky*) court necessitated a good deal of formality, the hiring

of an "advokat"—attorney, the signing of documents and the payment of a fee to the advokat and then the chances were overwhelmingly against a favorable verdict for the complainant, for the reason that the higher court was dominated by the landed nobility. Moreover, when a peasant ventured to seek justice in such a court, and his claim was rejected, he was responsible to the landlord for the time he lost in suing him and for the damage he may have caused in leaving certain work undone. Such legislation only tended to force the peasant laborer into a state of voluntary servitude.

In 1902 the landlords went a step further. They complained that the observance of so many holidays, on which the workers were idle, was detrimental to their interests, and they petitioned for the lifting of the legal ban on work on such days. To meet this complaint an edict was issued on the 10th of May, 1904, authorizing voluntary agricultural labor on Sundays and feast-days, both religious and civil, and the priests were enjoined to refrain from hindering a worker to comply with the new ruling. Shortly after the passage of this regulation the landlords in their written contracts with laborers specified, that they were to work on Sundays and holidays, if it should be necessary. This affected only peasants who hired out by the month, season, or year. But there were hundreds of thousands of such.

Wages for agricultural labor were on the whole very low. It could hardly be otherwise when there was an abundance of idle "hands" in the village, and where to keep from starvation the rural worker had to contrive to be always employed. In different sections under different conditions wages varied. The closer the estate was to a railroad or to a commercial center the higher were the wages. In the more thickly populated peasant regions wages were, of course, lower than in the more sparsely settled provinces. Then, too, if crops were unusually good, pay for agricultural labor was higher. If crops were poor, or a failure, the *mouzhik* was glad to accept anything that was offered to him. He was in such dire distress that he could not afford to reject any bid however small for his time and energy. In the government of Poltava between the years 1890–1900 the average wage by the day was 33 kopecks, by the month 3 roubles and 6 kopecks, by the year 29 roubles and 46 kopecks, whereas in the United States, excepting the south, for the year 1900 agricultural labor commanded 17 dollars a month, more than a Russian laborer in Poltava earned in a year! In the provinces of Minsk, Grodno, Wilno, Kovno, Mohilyev, Vitebsk, Smolensk, Viatka, Perm, Kursk, Orel, Tula Ryazan, Tambov, Voronezh, Saratov, Simbirsk, Penza, Kazan Ufa, Samara, Kherson, Kiev, Podolsk, Volhynya, Kharkov, Cernigov,—in other words in 27

other provinces, wages were either slightly lower or about the same or slightly higher than in Poltava during the period of 1890–1900. According to the table prepared by the United States Secretary of Agriculture in 1892, and as given by Peter Maslov, the average annual wage for farm labor in various countries was as follows:

Great Britain	770 (in francs)
United States	1250
France	625
Holland	500
Germany	450
Italy	250
India	150
Russia	153 (according to reports of landlords)

The Russian farm laborer received only three francs a year more than his Hindoo brother, despite the fact that owing to differences in climate and customs the Russian's requirements involved a larger expenditure of money than did those of the Hindoo.

During the first decade of this century wages for agricultural labor mounted upward but not in proportion to the rise in the prices of necessary commodities and land-rent, the latter of which, as we shall presently see, swallowed a goodly portion of the *mouzhik's* earnings from all sources. The following table prepared by Dr. Simon Blank and based upon reports of the *zemstvos*, shows the comparative

scale of wages at various periods in each of 44 provinces.

WAGES PER DAY IN KOPECKS

Provinces	MALE WORKERS						FEMALE WORKERS					
	With board			*Without board*			*With board*			*Without board*		
	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909
Vologda	39	36	46	50	47	61	21	22	26	29	31	38
Olonetz	38	44	51	56	57	70	21	25	29	34	37	45
St. Petersburg	42	48	57	58	58	77	27	30	35	37	39	42
Novgorod	34	38	46	49	50	62	21	23	27	31	32	40
Pskov	34	34	39	45	45	53	21	21	23	28	28	35
Vilno	26	28	36	37	36	49	18	18	22	26	24	33
Grodno	?	25	32	29	29	42	?	?	?	19	19	27
Kovno	31	33	45	47	47	66	19	21	27	31	30	39
Mohilev	29	32	40	38	40	51	18	18	23	24	24	32
Minsk	25	31	38	33	36	47	17	?	22	22	24	32
Vitebsk	33	35	42	43	45	57	19	21	25	27	28	35
Smolensk	33	35	45	44	45	57	19	21	26	27	29	36
Vladimir	38	44	58	51	58	76	19	23	31	28	32	43
Moscow	37	43	53	48	56	70	19	22	28	26	30	38
Kaluga	30	35	45	40	44	62	16	20	25	23	26	35
Tver	35	39	51	45	48	66	21	24	32	28	32	41
Jaroslav	47	47	63	60	61	79	26	28	38	36	37	52
Kostroma	37	43	55	46	53	70	22	25	32	28	34	42
Vyatka	26	30	37	35	39	50	16	19	23	22	26	33
Perm	34	35	45	46	46	59	20	20	27	30	29	38
Kursk	26	27	37	35	33	48	16	18	24	21	23	31
Orel	24	25	35	32	33	42	15	15	20	20	20	27

WAGES PER DAY IN KOPECKS—*Continued*

Provinces	MALE WORKERS						FEMALE WORKERS					
	With board			*Without board*			*With board*			*Without board*		
	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909	1883/1889	1890/1899	1900/1909
Tula	27	30	40	36	37	51	15	15	21	19	20	27
Ryazan	28	30	41	38	39	53	13	15	20	19	20	27
Tambov	23	26	34	33	34	43	14	15	19	18	19	24
Voronezh	27	28	40	35	37	51	16	18	24	20	23	32
Saratov	31	32	41	44	39	52	17	17	22	22	23	29
Simbirsk	28	25	38	38	31	50	14	13	20	20	18	28
Penza	23	22	33	31	31	43	13	13	18	18	17	25
Kazan	28	28	33	36	38	43	17	17	20	22	23	28
Nizhni-Novgorod	32	36	45	42	51	60	18	19	24	26	26	33
Ufa	27	25	35	35	34	47	17	16	23	22	21	31
Samara	31	30	42	38	36	54	17	17	23	22	22	30
Bessarabia	40	36	43	51	46	58	28	25	33	37	33	42
Kherson	31	34	38	41	42	50	21	24	29	29	32	38
Taurida	39	46	50	54	65	66	27	29	32	34	39	46
Jekaterinoslav	29	34	47	39	45	64	18	22	31	27	30	44
Don region	37	47	51	?	?	68	23	24	33	?	30	44
Podolsk	26	27	31	32	32	37	18	20	24	22	24	30
Kiev	25	26	33	32	34	40	18	20	25	24	25	31
Volhynya	?	24	29	32	30	40	?	16	19	20	21	26
Kharkov	28	28	40	37	36	50	17	20	27	25	25	35
Tshernigov	26	27	37	35	35	50	16	18	23	24	23	33
Poltava	26	26	35	33	33	44	17	19	24	23	24	32

Agricultural labor was, indeed, cheap in Russia, so cheap that in the long run it proved ruinous even to a good many landlords. It caused them to be satisfied with the norm and standard of agricultural technique on their farms, and they did not seek to introduce modern machinery and to institute scientific processes of cultivation. Why should they, when human labor was so comparatively inexpensive, and when there was always an abundance of it? In consequence the farms of these self-satisfied landlords deteriorated, the soil wore out, productivity slumped, and they sank deeper and deeper in debt. Economically cheap labor was a curse to every element concerned, even to the government, which had to bolster the impoverished land-owning nobles with frequent and generous loans to save them from total ruin.

The peasant, of course, was the chief sufferer. He was not even always successful in finding a buyer for his labor, because *there was not enough work on the big estates for all the peasants that were looking for jobs*. In winter there was never a heavy demand for laborers on the estates of the landlords, and in summer when crops were poor, and under Russian methods of cultivation failure of crops was no rare occurrence, there were not many jobs to be had. But even when crops were bountiful there was not enough work for all the idle hands in the village. In 21 provinces in Central Russia out of five million

available farm proletarians in the summer, not more than two and a half millions could find places to work. In 1909 there were according to Alexinsky seven million workers in rural Russia who were idle a good portion of the year, and yet seventeen million souls depended upon their labor for support.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OTHER ALTERNATIVES

THERE were a number of other alternatives to which the peasant might resort to augment his income. For one thing he could emigrate—leave his village and start on a hunt for work anywhere it could be found, in the city, in a foreign country, or in some unsettled part of Russia, such as Siberia and Central Asia.

Emigrating to the city would have been least difficult and least expensive. But as has already been pointed out in a preceding chapter there are comparatively few cities in Russia, so few that at most they can absorb not more than one-fifth of the annual increment in the rural population. Only when big industries are developed in Russia will it be possible for the peasant to find sufficient work in the city. Thousands of peasants who have journeyed to the city in the hope of finding employment there, having had to borrow money from usurers, or to sell a much-needed cow or horse, or hog, to obtain the funds for the trip, were dismally disappointed upon reaching their destination. They could find no place to work and had to return home, sometimes on foot, begging their way along.

Emigration to a foreign country likewise offered no satisfactory settlement of the problem of unemployment in the Russian village. In the first place the trip to a foreign country was fraught with many difficulties, both legal and financial. The prospective emigrant was obliged to procure a special passport from the governor of the province. Since he was himself either illiterate or else entirely inexperienced in the manner of filing an application for such a permit, he was under the necessity of engaging an attorney, and that involved considerable expense. In certain cases if the applicant was within three years of military age, he could not get a passport at all. It was not impossible, however, to leave the country without a passport, if one had the fee to pay to an agency which by arrangement with the frontier guards, smuggled the emigrant across the border. There were numerous such agencies in Russia. It was chiefly through them that political suspects and other disaffected persons managed to escape abroad. Then to embark upon a trip to a foreign country was an expensive enterprise for a peasant. It cost, for example, about one hundred dollars to come from Russia to this country in the steerage, not a big sum to an American, but a fortune to a *mouzhik*. If he was poor, he had to borrow it from the *kulak* or middleman, and we have already learned what extortionists these money-lenders were.

The government did not protect the peasant from the rapacity of loan sharks.

Then there was the problem of where to emigrate? None of the European countries welcomed immigrants, not a large influx of them. China and Japan were, of course, out of the reckoning and Australia and Africa were scarcely heard of in rural Russia. There remained the American continent. The word emigration in fact implies a journey to America, for few people in Russia ever thought of starting out in search of opportunity in a foreign land, until the fame of America as a place of untold riches and unheard of possibilities spread among the masses.

It was only at the beginning of the eighties of the past century that there began a wave of emigration of noticeable and ever-swelling dimensions from Russia to America. The Jews led in the exodus. The Poles, the Finns, the Lithuanians and other oppressed peoples followed. The letters these emigrants were writing home, the sums of money they were sending to friends and relatives, made the name of America popular in Russian cities and from there this popularity spread to the villages, and stirred many a *mouzhik* into a desire to seek his fortune in the much talked-of and far-away America. Since the Japanese war many Russian peasants have come to this continent, chiefly to the United States, yet not in numbers sufficient to relieve the stress of pov-

erty and unemployment at home. According to official Russian figures between 1904–1913 about two million Russians left their native land, but most of them, we should remember, were Jews, Poles and members of other subject peoples. It is impossible to estimate just what was the number of peasants who arrived on this continent during the above-mentioned period, but it surely did not exceed half a million, an insignificant number compared to the increase of the population in rural Russia during this interval.

Emigration to America, therefore, despite its inviting prospects did not and could not provide any appreciable amelioration to the constantly accumulating misery of the Russian peasant.

There remained Russia's own unsettled regions, like Siberia and Central Asia, to which the surplus population of the village could emigrate. In many ways these countries were the best and most desirable places to which the Russian peasant could go. After all though they might be far away from his home village, they were part of Russia, where the Russian language was spoken, and despite the presence there of primitive peoples and the absence of even those crude marks of civilization, to which he had been accustomed in his native village, they did not seem so far away as America. Besides there the peasant could find what he understood best, and

wanted most—land! According to Professor Migouline there are one and a quarter billions of *dessyatins* of land in Siberia and 314 million *dessyatins* in Central Asia, vast portions of which could be made available for agricultural and stock-raising purposes. How the proper utilization of these vast areas would relieve the congestion and ever-growing misery of the peasant can best be judged, when we reflect, that European Russia, which has an acreage of 415 million *dessyatins*, supports 120 million peasants, whereas Siberia has only a population of ten and Central Asia eight millions. Of course proportionately there is not as much available land in Siberia and Central Asia as in European Russia, and in any computation of the possibilities of colonization in these regions proper allowance must be made for that. But much of the land there can be made available, and if that were done vast masses of peasants could settle there and be contented.

One would, therefore, imagine that the government would strive to facilitate emigration to Siberia, and there were so many ways in which the government could make itself serviceable to the prospective pioneer. It could for one thing make it cheap and easy for him to obtain a passport; it could offer financial help to those who needed it; it could establish a network of information bureaus, where the prospec-

tive emigrant could learn of the conditions in the new country, the lands that were most available, the easiest way of reaching them, and many other things that might be of help to him. It could also build a chain of relief stations along the road. It could do a multitude of things, but it did not, even though the colonization of these sparsely inhabited countries would have been of decided profit to the government, not only in reducing indigence and, therefore, enlarging the tax-paying capacity of the peasant in European Russia, but also in the income it could derive from new settlers in new and flourishing communities. Instead, however, of facilitating emigration to the new countries, the government had for a long time done all within its power to hamper it. An ukase issued on July 25, 1889, stated that "all persons who emigrate without having previously obtained permission from the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Crown Lands, shall be sent back in charge of the proper authorities to the communities in which they are registered." And yet those who did apply for such permission waited for months before a reply reached them, and then not many were favored with the proper authorization. In several provinces by an act passed in 1896 a peasant was even forbidden to begin disposing of his household goods preparatory to his departure, unless he could show to the officials that he had a sum of 300 roubles in

cash. The reason offered for this ruling, which the stupidest *mouzhik* could easily evade by borrowing money for the occasion from a neighbor, was that the government desired to prevent the emigration of those who had not sufficient means to make the journey in comfort!

The real reason the government had set itself against emigration to the new countries was the same that had actuated it in the passing of the agricultural labor laws—a desire to maintain economic prosperity and stability of the landowning class. The departure of a large number of peasants to Siberia and Central Asia would have operated to the injury of the landlords in a double way—it would have reduced the supply of available farm help and, therefore, would have caused a rise in wages, and it would have also reduced the number of renters and, therefore, forced down the price of rent.

Yet despite the interference of the government, the peasant persisted in emigrating to the unsettled regions in search of a new home and a better life. He first began to leave for Siberia soon after the emancipation, in small numbers, at the rate of about 2000 a year. Early in the eighties with the growth of the misery in the European Russian villages there was a noticeable increase in the number of emigrants, and in the following years this increase swelled as shown in the table at top of page 131:

Year	*Number of emigrants to Siberia*
1881–82	74,000
1890	43,378
1891	82,150
1896	202,302
1897	86,575
1898	205,646
1899	223,981
1900	230,000
1901–05	68,000 average for each year
1905–10	401,000
1911–15	203,000

Not all of those who went to the new country remained there. Many found conditions so severe, that they felt obliged to return to the old home. Between 1898–1909 an average of 10.4 per cent wandered back to European Russia. In 1912 the number of the returned emigrants from Siberia was unusually large, 28.5 per cent, because it was growing increasingly difficult to find suitable places for settlement. There was still an abundance of land in Siberia and in northern Manchuria, but it had to be improved, and that required an army of workers and considerable capital, which the peasant did not have and could not obtain. Consequently a large number of peasants who had heard of the vast areas of vacant and fertile land in Siberia, and had sold off their possessions and wandered there with their families, were painfully disappointed upon their arrival at the much-longed for destination. They found there

deserts and swamps, infested with plagues, and impenetrable forests, far from railroads, highways and any marks of civilization. They tramped from place to place in a desperate endeavor to discover a suitable plot of ground for settlement. Many of them perished from cold, hunger and disease. Many others struggled back to their native villages, starved, ruined and homeless.

Emigration to Siberia, therefore, while a blessing to hundreds of thousands of peasants, having enabled them to acquire a fair amount of property, to build good homes, and to enjoy a considerable degree of prosperity, could not under the old régime offer deliverance to a large number of them. Only when a progressive enterprising government comes to direct the destinies of the Russian people, a government that will spare neither money nor energy to make the now uninhabitable regions of Russia's unsettled possessions suitable for human abode, a government which will drain the swamps, clear the forests, irrigate the deserts, lay new railroads, open new mines, build new industries, only then will Siberia and Central Asia and Turkestan afford living space to millions of new settlers.

There remained another expedient to which the peasant could resort in his search for relief from misery—buying and renting land. By increasing his allotment either through purchase or rental he

could, it would seem, increase his earning power and ward off starvation and pauperism. Of course he always searched for new land, and never missed an opportunity to take possession of it, either for permanent or temporary use, if it was at all possible for him to do so. But —

To buy land it was first of all necessary to have either money or credit, and the ordinary peasant who owned less land than was required for his self-support, had neither. The peasant land bank established in 1883 for the sole purpose of helping the peasant to buy new land, did not help the poor peasant, for it advanced loans only to applicants who possessed a substantial amount of property, from twelve to twenty-five per cent of the price of the purchased acreage. Besides, prices for land were inordinately high for two reasons. First, those who owned big tracts of land, the landlords, the monasteries and the crown, were not particularly eager to part with any considerable portions of their land-possessions, and secondly with the abolition of serfdom other elements of society, like the merchants, who had not formerly engaged in agriculture, now began to invest heavily in land. In fact in the first years after the emancipation the merchants bought more land than had all the peasants in forty provinces in European Russia. Between 1863–94 the first purchased an acreage to the value of 745

million roubles, and the latter to the amount of only 524 million roubles.

Of all the land the peasants bought between 1865–1895, 81.5 per cent was acquired by the larger landowners. The average peasant, therefore, derived practically no help from the peasant land bank. But even the wealthier *mouzhik* soon found himself so heavily entangled in financial difficulties that he could not extricate himself from them. It came about in a most natural manner. Since the revolution which followed the Russo-Japanese war the government offered more substantial help to peasants who qualified for loans. It not only appropriated larger sums for their credit, it also opened for sale large areas of crown land and acted as agent for the landlords in their transactions with the peasants, chiefly, it must be noted, for the sake of insuring to the sellers a good price for their land. Between the first of January, 1906, and the first of January, 1916, the peasant land bank disposed of 9,461,003 *dessyatins* of land at an indebtedness to the peasant of 1,398,224,507 roubles. The price of the land was very high, averaging in the period of 1911–1915 as much as 131.6 roubles a *dessyatin*, about three times as high as it had been in the years of 1883–1890, though income from land during this interval had not increased to the same degree. But since it was the best the peasant could do, he did not hesitate to make

extensive purchases. He wanted land. Price did not seem to disturb him very much, excepting when he had to make payments. Then he scurried and bustled about, and when he could not scrape together the required sum, he made no payments, with the result that arrears to the land bank continued to mount higher and higher, as shown in the following table:

Year	*Amount of arrears in roubles*	*Percentage of debt*
1911	9,071,900	21.3
1912	13,135,800	26.1
1913	15,382,800	27.2
1914	18,414,200	30.1
1915	33,685,000	51.6
1916	46,525,400	68.5

At best, therefore, the acquisition of land through purchase, because of the conditions governing eligibility for credit at the Peasant Bank, and because of exorbitant prices, could offer only limited help to a very limited number of peasants. As far as the poor peasants were concerned they were in no position to buy land.

But what of renting land? On the whole it was even less advantageous than buying. Rent was excessively high, because the demand for leases was inordinately large. And in this instance the well-to-do peasant was again at a decided advantage over

his poorer neighbor. He rented land only, when he felt that the income would yield a profit. Otherwise it was more remunerative for him to hire out during his leisure days and work for wages. Usually because he was in a position to pay in advance, he could obtain a lease at a lower rate and for a number of years, thus avoiding the necessity of making a bargain every year, and running the risk of having the rental fee raised. The poorer peasant, however, rented land under any circumstances, wherever and whenever he could. He rented land even if he knew beforehand that the returns would not any more than compensate him for his labor. He did not seek profit. He was content with wages. Because he could not pay in advance he paid a higher fee, and could obtain a lease for only one year, so that the landlord had a chance to raise the rental every year. Still, the poor peasant persisted in renting land, even when his income yielded no more than low wages in the form of straw or pasture for his cows, and even when the rental fee exceeded the income. He was so hard pressed economically that he stopped at nothing to lease a strip of land. He borrowed. He mortgaged his stock, sold his implements, pawned his labor in advance, ran into arrears, heavier and heavier every year, and continued to rent land. Like a gambler he was always hoping that something would happen, a banner crop or high prices, which

would redeem him from his ever-increasing indebtedness and poverty. And yet there was not nearly enough land to supply the demand for leases. In all the peasants rented about twenty-five million *dessyatins* a year, on the whole a small area for a population of over one hundred and twenty million peasants.

CHAPTER IX

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE PEASANT

1. Political

Such was the condition of the Russian peasant before the Revolution of March, 1917. He was deliberately squeezed into a vise and the clamps were constantly tightened round him. Until 1861 he was kept in serfdom; when he was freed, he was given little land; he was obliged to pay extortionate prices for this land; he was held in ignorance; he was denied rights of citizenship; he was made a slave of the *mir*, the state and the prey of a horde of rapacious officials; in every way he was hampered in his efforts to better his condition. He was looked upon not as a human being with sensibilities, tastes, desires, wants, that merited consideration and required satisfaction, but as an inferior creature, fit only to serve others. What could be more illustrative of the truth of this statement than the laws that were passed to regulate the conditions of agricultural labor, which practically made the landlords masters of their peasant laborers, or the laws restricting emigration and binding the peasant to the village, even when he had nothing to

do there, except to welter in filth and poverty, all for the purpose of maintaining a vast supply of cheap labor and a big army of profit-yielding renters? As conservative a writer as E. J. Dillon, says, "The peasantry was no more than a wealth-creating machine for the behoof of the ruling classes, and the rulers took so little thought of their own interests, that they failed to keep the machinery properly lubricated or in smoothly running working condition."

The results of these systematic repressions are sad enough. One can see them in the village, in the filth and sloth that abounds inside and outside of the peasant homes; one can read them in the census reports of the Russian government and in the bulky tones of *zemstvo*-statistics; one can hear them in the everyday language of the peasant, in his songs, sayings and prayers. When asked how he is getting on, the peasant would shrug his shoulders, and say, "Like a fish on ice," or "like a fly in tar."

The brutal fact is that the Russian peasant has been starving. Try as hard as he might, he simply could not make both ends meet. Since about 1875, scarcely a year has passed but in some one or series of provinces hunger visited the peasant districts as regularly as snow, and lingered even longer. In 1891–1892 no less than thirty million peasants in the rich black soil region were stricken with famine, which resulted in the virtual extinction of many villages.

True, there was a crop-failure in that region in the years mentioned. But even in years of abundant yields the average peasant did not have enough to eat or else had to contrive to live on foods that did not possess the nutritive elements the body requires. In 1899, 1902, and 1906, famines on a large scale again assailed many peasant districts, and devastated many villages. According to A. Maress, in 1897, 70.7 per cent of the peasant population did not produce enough food for their sustenance; 20.4 produced just enough food for themselves and stock, and only 8.9 per cent had harvested a surplus of agricultural products. According to Milyukov the yields in grain on peasant lands slumped during the first forty years after the emancipation to 88 per cent of what they had been under serfdom, and grain, especially rye, it must be remembered, is the chief article of nourishing food in the peasant's diet. Not only did the peasant raise less grain, he had to sell more, so as to keep down the constantly mounting pile of debts, which means, that he had to compel himself to reduce to a minimum the consumption of the most nourishing food he produced. Milyukov figures that the peasant averages sixteen pouds of bread a year, whereas the soldier was allowed by the government twenty-nine pouds a year. Having less bread to eat the peasant began to consume more potatoes, three times as much as he had in the first years after the emancipation.

Potatoes are quite filling and dull the pangs of hunger, when a sufficient quantity has been consumed, but they do not provide the body with the necessary tissue-building elements. Meat, too, the peasant had to use more sparingly, and also milk products, for the number of cows in his possession diminished constantly—one-tenth between 1870 and 1900.

No wonder there is so much illness in the Russian village, and the rate of mortality keeps increasing instead of diminishing as in other countries. At the end of the eighteenth century Russia's death rate was 20 per thousand, and at the end of the nineteenth century it was 35 per thousand, twice as high as in the United States. And no wonder also that in many sections one-third of the children born in the village do not survive their first year.

Said Saltykov, Russia's gifted satirist:

"Why does our peasant go in bast shoes instead of leather boots? Why does such dense and widespread ignorance prevail throughout the land? Why does the *mouzhik* seldom or never eat meat, butter or even animal fat? How does it happen that you rarely meet a peasant who knows what a bed is? Why is it we all discern in all the movements of the Russian *mouzhik* a fatalistic vein devoid of the impress of conscience? Why, in a word, do the peasants come into the world like insects and die like summer flies?"

There are critics, Russians and foreigners, who in

reply to the questions of Saltykov have said, that the peasant himself is to blame for his misery, that he is what he is, because he is lazy, shiftless, extravagant, that he indulges in drink too much, and spends too lavishly on factory-made clothes and hats and other articles of apparel, which drain his meager resources uselessly. It is true, indeed, that when liquor was on sale in Russia, the peasant consumed a good deal of vodka, that he often even sold a much-needed sack of grain and pawned his sheepskin coat to satisfy his craving for alcohol. It must be remembered, however, that the government did everything within its power to lure him into spending his money in its vodka shops. The peasant did not drink in moderate quantities every day. He drank by spasms, and in "gulps" not beakers but bottles at a time, and usually on Sundays and holidays, when he did not work. He went to church, and from church to the vodka shops, which opened as soon as church services were over! Sundays and holidays were the days on which the peasant gorged himself with vodka, and the government could easily have prevented this dissipation by keeping closed the vodka shops on these days. But the government wanted revenue, and, therefore, flaunted temptation before the *mouzhik's* eyes.

It is true, also, that the peasant was beginning to buy factory-made materials for his clothes in ever-

increasing quantities, not, however, because he was growing extravagant in his desire to ape the city population in dress, but because, as Milyukov points out, he was really economical, and wanted to use the cheapest possible cloth for his garments—calico or something as low-priced which was worth less per yard than the homewoven cloth.

As for the alleged laziness of the peasant, it is scarcely more than a legend. Anyone that has ever been in a Russian village and seen the peasant at work with his crude, lumbering, inefficient implements, knows what a hard-working person he is. See him in the field bent with a sickle over his grain, or knee-deep in a swampy meadow swinging a heavy straight-handled scythe, under a scorching sun; or see him in a stuffy barn swinging a flail from early morning until late in the evening; or see him standing on top of a log resting upon a high support, or beneath it, and pulling laboriously at a saw, up and down, with gusts of saw-dust flying into his beard, eyes, nose, mouth, and hair. Consider also that in nearly all of his tasks he uses implements, which an American farmer would gather into a pile and set afire, before he would ever bother working with them, and you cannot help wondering at the industriousness of the *mouzhik* and his unlimited patience and perseverance. The tragedy of the peasant was not that he was lazy—he would have perished had he allowed

himself to be—but that he did not have enough work, because of conditions over which he had no control, and what work he had, did not yield enough income to supply him with the necessaries of life.

These are the facts of the everyday life of the peasant, before the coming of the Revolution. A clear and complete understanding of them and of the forces that shaped the peasant's existence, is surely indispensable to a correct estimate of the nature of the Russian Revolution, for it is from them that the Revolution has sprung, and it is on them that it feeds. It is this economic and social environment that has molded the peasant's basic conceptions of life, those desires and aspirations which form the propelling force of the Revolution.

What are these conceptions? What does life mean to the peasant? What are his ideas of government? of society? of justice? What does he want, and what is he struggling for?

For one thing, the peasant's conception of the state is exceedingly vague. Under the old régime he knew there was a Czar, he knew he had to go to the army and perform a host of other disagreeable and dangerous duties. But he did not understand the function and purpose of the state, for the state in which he lived was not an outgrowth of his needs, and could never, therefore, become part of his life.

Not that his attitude toward the Russian state was

critical. It was practically a foreign element in his consciousness. He was kept in ignorance. If he was fortunate to be admitted to a school, instead of studying history, civics, he crammed his mind full of dates, names of emperors, their relatives, near and distant, fables, formulas, hymns. He scarcely ever read newspapers, or periodicals, or books. He traveled little, and when he did, as when he went to the army or took a trip to the city in search of work, he, of course, saw something of the big world, and new concepts were formed in his mind, but not extensively enough to enable him to view himself in perspective, as part of a big powerful organism called the state, the purpose and intricate workings of which he could comprehend and evaluate. He lived in the village among people as ignorant as himself, and if better educated, forbidden to communicate to him their knowledge, especially on political subjects. He was surrounded by woods, prairies, marshes, far from the roar and din of civilization, with scarcely a breath of the outside world ever disturbing the heavy monotony that hung over his life, performing his tasks day after day, year after year, in the same crude, inefficient, slow manner, eating the same foods, wearing very largely the same clothes, living in the same hovel, going to the same church, listening to the same droll chants and unenlightening exhortations and with no big outlook on life. It is true,

that since the Revolution of 1905 events have occurred, like the elections to the fateful Dumas, and the general uproar which preceded and followed these elections, which have jarred the peasant into some comprehension of the meaning of political institutions, their functions, powers and aims, but even with these added experiences, and essentially because of the painful disillusionment that came of them, his political consciousness has expanded but little, so little that he has not been thinking much in political terms and has not been struggling for political ends.

A related matter in the peasant's conception of the state is the peasant's conception of "zakon," law. He had no part in making the laws that governed him. He never was even consulted as to what laws he deemed necessary for the protection and promotion of his welfare. He knew only that they were things to be obeyed. He seldom knew when laws were made, until he was told of them by officials, or until he violated them and was punished for the violation. Besides different officials interpreted laws in different ways to suit the immediate occasion and their self-interest. These laws were not expressive of his conceptions of justice and did not minister to his welfare. On the contrary, as pointed out in the discussion of the legal and social position of the peasant, they constantly curbed and repressed his oppor-

tunities and desires for advancement. Says A. Nastyrev who has made a special study of the peasant's attitude toward law: "Law in the eyes of the *mouzhik* is something terrible, mysterious, incomprehensible, that in the name of which the government terrorizes, abuses, mutilates, whips out arrears in taxes, exiles to Siberia, disembowels corpses, pulls down houses, kills stock, drafts into the army, drives children to school, compels vaccination, etc., ad infinitum." And Kocharrovsky, another leading authority on peasant life, says, "The rôle of law in the life of the peasant is something similar to a dreadful natural phenomenon, the purpose of it is not understood, but its power is felt to be irresistible."

The remarkable thing about this attitude toward state law is the fact that even after the Czar was overthrown and revolutionary governments came into power, the peasant continued as formerly to be suspicious and hostile to rulings from "above." Said Peshekhonov, Minister of Supplies in the second Provisional Government: "The old power is gone; a new power has come into being, but the masses have no confidence in it." Kerensky in nearly all of his addresses, but especially in the one he delivered at the Moscow Conference, lamented the fact that the distrust and contempt the masses had entertained toward the old régime, they transferred toward the new order. And Lenine in a speech on January 17th,

1919, after fifteen months of Bolshevist rule in Russia, deplored the fact that "millions of inhabitants grew accustomed to regard the Central Power of the nation as an organization of landlords, exploiters and murderers." Indeed, it will take not a little time and not a little direct personal participation in law-making, before the peasant will lose his distrust of rulings from "above."

There are a number of writers, and Mr. E. J. Dillon is one of them, who seem to be under the impression that the Russian is a sort of born anarchist, instinctively rebellious against all forms of outward restraint. Is he more so than is the American, Frenchman, or Englishman? If they had had his experiences with state law, they too would have grown impatient and rebellious against it, only because of a higher development of individuality, they would have manifested their opposition in a much more effectual manner. King George the third must have regarded the American colonists as anarchists; so must have Charles the first adjudged his countrymen; so must have Louis the sixteenth viewed his subjects; so must have every autocrat since the earliest days of history looked upon those of his subjects who exhibited defiance of existing laws. The fact is, that as far as the peasant is concerned he gladly submits to laws, the purpose and working of which he understands and approves. He conscientiously upholds and obeys the

various regulations which the village "*skhod*" adopts from time to time in the administration of its local affairs. Furthermore the very existence of thousands of coöperative societies in the Russian villages is proof positive of the capacity of the *mouzhik* to adhere to discipline and to submit to the regulations of a collective body, which constitutes a fundamental attribute of a law-abiding citizen in a free state.

Nor is the Russian peasant a patriot. We can hardly expect him to be. A man is a patriot and "zealously supports its (his country's) authority and interests," as Webster defines the word, when he knows his country, and is convinced rightly or wrongly that it is part of him, and that he is part of it. He may have only a very limited voice in the direction of its affairs, as did the Germans under the Kaiser, but he seems to feel that those who do rule over it, rule for him, make him the beneficiary of its blessings, and that any calamity which befalls his country is a calamity which befalls him personally.

But under the old régime what did the Russian peasant know of his country? What had it done for him? Patriotism was constantly preached to the peasant in the army, in church, at various public gatherings, but it meant nothing to him, and never struck root in his consciousness. As long as the legend of the goodness of the Czar clung to his mind, he was ready to offer himself not for his country, but for his Czar.

But when the realities of life blasted that legend in his mind, there remained nothing, not even the shadow of a symbol to rouse his devotion to the institution of which he was a part. All the great things that Russia has produced for the world, literature, art, music, in short what one would call culture, which might inculcate a sense of national pride in the intellectual, are as foreign to him as the fourth dimension. As long as he cannot be made to feel that Russia is his country, his motherland, that it exists for him, not he for it, he will remain barren of the sentiment of patriotism and national spirit, no matter how profuse and eloquent the exhortations which are addressed to him. At present he thinks only of himself, his own needs, his own woes. The rest of Russia does not concern him—it is so big, so remote. He will deal with it only in so far as it will deal with him. He will fight only when his personal welfare is at stake, for he really has nothing else to fight for. He knows of nothing else. That was why when the Czar was overthrown, he very largely stopped paying taxes. Why should he go on paying big sums of money to the people "above"? he questioned. And when he failed to obtain from the city the supplies he needed—calico, leather, iron, implements,—he as readily stopped sending grain to the city when Shingarev, the Constitutional Democrat, was Minister of Agriculture, or when Chernov, Social-Revolutionary,

succeeded Shingarev, as he had when Rittich occupying that office under the Czar. Hungry women and children in the city, a starving, famishing men of his own class, of his own ge, perhaps, in the army, did not stir him into rrying his rye to the freight trains, when in return for it he could not obtain the goods he needed. Fiery exhortations were of no avail. He was not a citizen of a country. He was a resident. No wonder that the Russian army, made up mostly of peasants, collapsed so utterly and so tragically after the Czar was overthrown.

This in brief is the political ideology of the peasant. His vague conception of political institutions, his lack of active patriotism, his distrust of law and authority from above, indicate how immature and raw is his political consciousness. He thinks not in positive but in negative political concepts, not of what he believes to be politically right and proper, but of what he knows to be wicked and vicious. He has never formulated a constructive political program, had never thought one necessary, and has paid little heed to those who have endeavored to urge one upon him. In the course of the first congress of the Peasant Union in 1905 a social-democratic representative proposed a resolution recommending to the peasants that they instruct their delegates to the much-hoped-for Constituent Con-

vention to urge the formation of a democratic republic. The resolution was voted down by a vast majority on the ground that its adoption would frighten the peasant masses away from the Union! The opposition was right. The peasant's mind was almost barren of positive political concepts. Parliament, constitution, president, legislature, initiative and referendum, proportionate representation, these words are quite obscure to him. Only now under the pressure of epochal events is he slowly acquiring a political consciousness and positive political concepts. It will take, however, not a little time before these will crystallize into a definite effectual political program. But at present the *mouzhik* is interested chiefly in a thorough change of his economic and social condition by whatever methods possible.

In the absence of a political education and political experience, in the absence of a vital interest in mere political reform and under the pressure of intolerable poverty, the peasant has come to think of life almost exclusively in terms of social and economic changes, and whenever political methods have been suggested to him, he has valued them only in so far as they held forth promise of realizing his social and economic goal quickly and effectively.

CHAPTER X

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE PEASANT (*Continued*)

2. Social

In passing now to a consideration of the peasant's social ideology it is first necessary to take cognizance of his rather peculiar attitude toward private property.

Both reactionary Slavophils and Socialists of the "Populist," so-called brand, regarded the peasant as a born communist, uncontaminated by the spirit of individualism of the capitalistic West, and, therefore, free from the vices of this individualism, such as greed for personal gain and ambition to attain riches at whatever cost to character and to the welfare of one's neighbor. The peasant commune, they declared, prevented the concentration of property and power in few hands and the consequent formation of conflicting social classes. This commune was to them a holy institution, by means of which the peasant could make a short cut to a higher social order, escaping the travail and agony of capitalistic development, and destined, therefore, to lead peacefully all mankind to a superior stage of social evolution.

The peasant, according to these theorists, did not even possess a sense of private property, a belief that is still professed by some orthodox Populists. Sober science and the trend of events, however, have exploded these romantic theories of the Slavophils and Populists. It has been definitely ascertained that the commune is by no means a distinctive Russian institution, that it existed in western Europe in one form or another, when the communal form of landed ownership corresponded with the then existing stage of economic development. The commune which prevailed in Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was in its constituency, functions and methods of procedure almost an exact counterpart of the Russian *mir*. Later when the commune was dissolved in Germany, and many German peasants migrated to Russia to the government of Saratov, they continued to live in a communal manner, and subsequently when many of them left Russia, and migrated to the prairies of Nebraska, Kansas and the Dakotas, they imported their communism with them. In point of sheer perfection these German communes as they now exist in America, are far in advance of the Russian *mir*, for in them absolute coöperation prevails—all members not only owning the land in common but working it jointly, and all sharing alike in the fruits of their collective labor, whereas in the *mir*, each member works his own

assigned plot, and whatever crops he gathers are his personal possession. It is obvious, therefore, that there is nothing distinctively Russian in the peasants commune, and that its existence in the form of the *mir*, is not at all expressive of a certain particularly noble, inherently Russian form of idealism, but is rather a symptom of a backward economic development.

Economic pressure from above and below have preserved the *mir* in Russian life. On the one hand the government in its effort to perpetuate the social system that prevailed under serfdom and to create an effective tax-collecting instrument, so bound the peasants together in the *mir*, that they could not separate from it or only with difficulty, and on the other hand the peasant himself struggled desperately to earn his bread, with little land at his disposal, so little that if he had cut it up into individual parcels, he would scarcely have had any pasture and woodland, and could hardly have kept any stock or had any fuel and lumber; and in time of economic depression he would have been obliged to sell it and join the army of proletarians, for whom there was not enough work in the country. That perhaps would have proved in the long run no more or even less of a calamity than remaining attached to a devitalized strip of land. Yet the mere occupation of such a strip of land in the absence of other profitable

and steady work, was a sort of insurance against complete destitution. That was why the peasant on his part strove to uphold the commune. Still it must be emphasized that despite these constraining forces, the aims of the government and the indigence of the peasant, the commune was actually deteriorating socially; distinct classes of *kulacks* and poor peasants were coming into existence; power and property were concentrating; the poor peasant, being forbidden to sell his land, was renting it away for a long period and thus practically sundering his connection with it. The capitalistic differentiation which the Slavophils and Populists had deprecated, was actually fast invading the *mir* and disrupting the economic and social equality that was supposed to have reigned there undisturbed.

Thus there is as much justification in ascribing to the peasant an innate devotion to the principle of communism, as there is to credit him with an innate preference for keeping his pigs in the house during the cold months. Both were matters of necessity, not choice. As a matter of fact the *mouzhik* has acquired a deep and keen sense of private property. His house, stock, implements, crops, are his personal possession, and it has never been averred by the staunchest Populist that the peasant does not believe in having and holding as much of these as he can secure, or that he favors their periodic redistri-

bution so as to equalize their shares among all members of the village. Nor is it correct to assert that only as far as land is concerned does the peasant manifest no sense of private property. After all his conceptions are not so finely spun as to lead him to regard a horse or hog or a pair of boots as objects of private property, and a meadow or a stretch of forest as something beyond the possibility of becoming his individual possession. In reality whenever and wherever an opportunity has presented itself, the peasant has gladly acquired property in land, all that he could afford and sometimes more, too, as the arrears to the land-bank so eloquently testify; and no one will dispute the fact, that there is not a peasant living who is in the least averse to coming into proprietorship of a farm. Says Tugan-Baranovsky one of Russia's leading economists: "Our peasant is by no means a proletarian; he has his own household, which he loves passionately, and with which he will part only under the pressure of extreme necessity. The dream of our peasant is the possession of a profitable farm of his own."

Yet, though possessing a distinct sense of private property in land, the attitude of the Russian peasant toward such property is rather different from that of the western or American farmers. The latter because of their sojourn in an environment of individualism, deeply intensified by the rapid growth of industrial-

ism, having been accustomed to independent ownership of land, and having enjoyed a comparative degree of economic prosperity, have come to regard private property in land as much and as sacred a right as that of going to school or getting married. Our New Hampshire dairyman, as well as our Kansas wheat-grower and Colorado cattle-rancher and California fruit-farmer firmly believe in the right of any individual to have and to hold all the land that is deeded to him, and to do with it whatever he pleases, to rent, sell or exchange it for a home, a shop, an automobile. He looks upon private property in land as the most fundamental inviolate right of the individual. But the conditions in the life of the Russian peasant have not bred in him the same devotion to the institution of private property in land. In the first place the peasant is not given to trading in land. Even the richer peasant, when he purchases an additional holding, does so usually, not for the purpose of selling but of working or renting, if he cannot work it himself. One is safe in saying that perhaps in no other country in the world has the farmer been so little given to dealing in land as a commodity of exchange as in Russia. One does not meet in Russian agricultural or agrarian literature the phrase "peasant land-speculator" for there are scarcely any such speculators. Of course the communal form of ownership prevented the selling of land. But even in

places where the commune does not prevail, or where lands have been purchased on an extensive scale, speculative exchange in land on the part of peasants, is conspicuously absent. The peasant's experience with land is limited only to that of a tiller, a laborer. He associates, therefore, the ownership of the land with the working of it. He believes that the land in its natural state is nobody's, the creation of God, and that none others but those who work it with their own hands, shall have the right to possess themselves of it. The streams and fields, and forests, he is convinced, were created only for those who want to apply their own labor to them. All Russian authorities, conservative and liberal, are agreed as to this fundamental notion of the peasant, a notion which is by no means distinctively Russian, but which, as Maslov points out, prevailed in the sixteenth century in western Europe, and which is common to all peoples at the beginning of capitalistic development, but which disappears in the course of industrial growth, because of the social and economic differentiations that such growth creates.

It is interesting to note in this connection that in southern Russia where sectarianism has met with much favor, and where the peasant reads the Bible a good deal and interprets it in the light of his own experiences, the belief is common that according to the written word of God, as recorded in the Bible, it

is wrong to sell or gamble in land, or do anything else but work it with one's own hands. The sectarian peasant contends, that even the Czar is forbidden by God to take land from the people who work it, and he quotes passage after passage from the Bible in corroboration of his contention. The following are some of the scriptural passages he most frequently cites in defense of his beliefs:

"So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel.

"And it shall come to pass that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

"And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God." (Ezekiel, ch. 47, verses 21–23.)

"Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession, that my people be not scattered every man from his possession." (Ezekiel, ch. 46, verse 18.)

"The land shall not be sold forever: for the land

is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." (Leviticus, ch. 25, verse 23.)

"For I mean not that other men be eased and ye burdened. But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for your want; that there may be equality." (2 Corinthians, ch. 8, verse 13.)

"Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field till there be no place, that they may be placed in the midst of the earth." (Isaiah, ch. 5, verse 8.)

The Stundists, or the Russian Baptists as they are sometimes called, have been particularly zealous in citing the above and other biblical quotations as proofs of the inviolate claim of the working peasant to the land of Russia.

Another condition which sustains the aforementioned belief in the peasant, is his landlessness or land poverty. Here again we notice a marked contrast in the position of the American farmer or the French, Dutch, Belgian peasant and that of the Russian *mouzhik*. The American farmer has an abundance of territory for pasture as well as for tillage, and he has enjoyed on the whole quite a substantial amount of prosperity. The French, Belgian, Dutch, German homesteader, though possessing a small acreage, in some instances actually much smaller on the average than that of the *mouzhik*,

has because of the practice of intensive methods of cultivation, the presence of nearby, well-paying markets and amply developed transportation facilities been able to reap more or less satisfactory financial rewards. In the case of the *mouzhik*, as we have already learned in a previous chapter, fifteen per cent of the householders engaged in farm-work in 1905 possessed not a span of land of their own, and seventy per cent of those tilling their own allotments possessed an area anywhere between one and ten *dessyatins*, at best less than was actually required to maintain the low standard of living to which the Russian peasant is accustomed. Add to this the other disagreeable features in the agricultural life of the *mouzhik*, the sovereignty of the *mir*, and its stultifying effect upon personal initiative, the high rent, the low wages of labor, the utter impossibility for any but the very fortunate few to come into possession of additional holdings, and it is easy to conceive why the primitive notion of the land being the creation of God, therefore the possession of those who work it, has remained so firmly rooted in the mind of the Russian peasant even in those places, as in Ukraine, where individual ownership in land has always prevailed, and this despite the pressure of social differentiation, which the growth of capitalism was introducing.

A third factor in molding the peasant's attitude

toward private property in land is his belief that labor is entitled to all that it produces—a notion that is likewise an inevitable outcome of his past experience. In the first place he has always sustained himself by his labor. It has been his sole weapon in the struggle for existence—all that he has ever attained and enjoyed has come to him essentially by means of his labor. Secondly, in his environment he sees labor producing everything—clearing forests, raising crops, erecting buildings. In the absence of a complex industrial mechanism, with the simple semi-primitive forms that prevail in Russian village life, all the processes of production are minutely known to the peasant and practiced solely by him. Under these circumstances it is rather natural that he though unversed in the science of economics, ignorant even of the existence of such a science, should come to ascribe to labor a preëminent rôle in the creation of wealth—the wealth of course known to him—and, therefore, entitled to the full enjoyment of such wealth.

In explaining this ideological phenomenon, which does not prevail in western countries, A. Yefimenko says: "In western countries the pressure of the upper layer of society upon the lower was so great, that it successfully crushed out of the latter those juridical conceptions, which were originally common to them as workers. The development of the economic

order, which tore the peasant from his land, the laborer from the product of his labor, which made labor the indirect and not the direct means of satisfying the wants of the laborer, further helped to destroy these conceptions. Such was the case in the west. But in Russia the situation is to a very large degree different. Our peasant having remained on his land has preserved in a much larger measure the immediate connection between the laborer and the product of his toil, and has, therefore, retained the juridical ideas of this particular type of labor."

This conception of labor has found abundant expression in the social relations of the peasants toward each other. "The right of invested labor," says Kocharovsky, whom the reserved Tugan-Baranovsky calls the leading authority on peasant life, "as a basis for all forms of property rights, exists decidedly in all the manifestations of popular customary law. That is why the sphere of distribution of the rights of labor coincides with the province of customary law in general." In the peasant courts, for example, which date back to olden times, and in which justice is administered on the basis of customary law and tradition, labor has always been recognized as having rights prior and superior to property and even kinship. Stepniack gives the following summary of the verdicts of these tribunals which were collected by a government commission, and which

clearly define the peasant's attitude toward labor and property:

"Kinship has no influence whatever in the distribution and proportioning of shares at any division of property. It is determined by the quantity of work each has given to the family. The brother who has lived and worked with the family for the longer time, will receive most, no matter whether he be the older or the younger. He will be excluded from the inheritance altogether, if he has been living somewhere else, and has not contributed in some way to the common expenses. The same principle is observed in settling the differences between the other grades of kinsfolk. The cases of sons-in-law, stepsons, and adopted children are very characteristic. If they remained a sufficient time—ten years or more—with the family, they receive, though strangers, all the rights of legitimate children, whilst the legitimate son is excluded if he did not take part in the common work.

"This is in flagrant contradiction to the civil code of Russia, as well as of other European countries. The same contradiction is observable in the question of women's rights. The Russian law entitles women—legitimate wives and daughters—to one-fourteenth only of the family inheritance. The peasant's customary law requires no such limitations. The women are in all respects dealt with on an equal

footing with the men. They share in the property in proportion to their share in the work. Sisters as a rule, do not inherit from brothers, because in marrying they go to another family, and take with them as dowry the reward of their domestic work. But a spinster sister, or a widow, who returns to live with her brothers, will always receive or obtain from the tribunal her share.

"The right of inheritance being founded on work alone, no distinction is made by the peasant's customary law between legitimate wives and concubines.

"It is interesting to note that the husband, too, inherits the wife's property, if she has brought him any, only when they have lived together sufficiently long—above ten years; otherwise the deceased wife's property is returned to her parents.

"The principle ruling the order of inheritance is evidently the basis of the verdicts in all sorts of litigation. Labor is always recognized as giving an incontrovertible right to property. According to common jurisprudence, if one man has sown a field belonging to another—especially if he has done it knowingly—the court of justice will unhesitatingly deny the offender any right to the eventual product. Our peasants are as strict in their observance of boundaries, when once traced, as are any other agricultural folk. But labor has its imperishable rights.

The customary law prescribes a remuneration for the work executed in both of the above-mentioned cases—in the case of unintentional as well as in the case of premeditated violation of property. Only in the first instance, the offender who retains all the product, is simply compelled to pay to the owner the rent of the piece of land he has sown according to current prices with some trifling additional present; whilst in the case of violation knowingly done, the product is left to the owner of the land, who is bound, nevertheless, to return to the offender the seed, and to pay him a laborer's wage for the work he has done.

"If a peasant has cut wood in a forest belonging to another peasant the tribunal settles the matter in a similar way. In all these cases the common law would have been wholly against the offender, the abstract right of property reigning supreme."

Of course not always are cases decided upon the basis of the above-mentioned principles. There are numerous and frequent exceptions, due to the fact that powerful influences from the outside such as bribery, intimidation by officials, have exerted a vitiating effect upon the peasant courts, and have forced them to issue decrees at variance with the traditional conceptions of justice. It would also be incorrect to assert that all peasants approve of the customary principles bearing on the relation between property and labor. The peasant trader, the

kulack and all those who have accumulated a substantial amount of property in land and other utilities, decidedly oppose these principles, and for the same reason, for which the other peasants favor them—both are primarily concerned in the promotion of their economic interest. But the number of affluent peasants in Russia is proportionately small, and I am not concerned with them in this discussion of The Russian Revolution, for they are not part of the Revolution in the sense in which the poor peasants are.

The vast majority of the peasants adhere to and uphold their traditional conceptions of the rights of labor not as Kocharovsky explains, because of a high cultural development, which they manifestly do not possess, but because of the historical conditions which molded their ideas of right and wrong.

These conditions and conceptions, to wit, the absence of trading in land, landlessness and land poverty, the attitude toward property in land and toward the rights of labor, account for the peasant's conviction that he has an inalienable right to the land. Even when he was a serf, the property of the master, he persistently declared that the land was his, as is lucidly expressed in the popular saying: "*My washi, a zemlia nasha*"—"we are yours, but the land is ours." He looks upon the landlords not as owners, but as usurpers of the land. He

cares not for their deeds, titles, and other legal safeguards. They mean nothing to him. "In the consciousness of the people," said a representative from Vladimir at the Congress of the Peasant Union in 1905, "land is the gift of God, like air and water. Only he who wants to work it should get it, each according to his needs." And the peasant deputy Anikine in a speech in the Duma said: "We need the land not for sale or mortgage, not for speculation, not to rent it and get rich, but to work it. The land interests us not as merchandise or commodity, but as a means to raise useful products. We need the land only to plant." All the utterances of peasants express a similar spirit, hence the slogan of the Russian agrarian movement, "*Zemlia narodu*"—"the land to the people, the working people."

Indeed in land, and in land alone, does the *mouzhik* see a panacea for all his ills. Land! Land! Land! From one end of Russia to the other this word has resounded with ever-increasing loudness. The only hope that has sustained the peasant in the centuries of bondage, was his undying belief that some day something would happen, which would make him the sole possessor of the land in Russia, and then an end would come to his privations. Little has he realized, that the expropriation of the *pomieshtchiks* and other holders of big estates will not throw open an unlimited land fund out of which a man could

carve a strip as need arose and join it to his allotment. In all not more than sixty million *dessyatins* can be added at present to the peasant holdings—a vast area, indeed, but if divided among about sixteen million householders, it would add only enough to the allotment of each substantially to ameliorate his condition for a short time, and would in the course of a few years leave him helpless again, unless the transfer of this land were accompanied by a general improvement in the industrial condition of the country, which would make it possible for a portion of the rural population to move to the city and settle there, and more important by far, unless new methods of tillage were introduced, new machinery brought in, new railroads built, new highways laid, so as to enable the peasant to raise bigger crops and dispose of them in well-established markets, without much ado and with little loss. Only now under the impact of the brutal realities of life, which the Revolution has lashed to the surface, is the *mouzhik* beginning to appreciate more fully the need of these improvements.

And yet it was rather natural that he should have, during the past ages, cherished the hope and the belief, that the division of the non-peasant lands would provide him with the means of an ample livelihood. He really knows of nothing else that would offer relief. Other fields of activity have been prac-

tically closed to him. Commercial life has scarcely had any opening for him—men from other classes of society have very largely monopolized that field of endeavor. In the city there has been no work for him, and in the village not enough, and to search for work in other places has been extremely difficult, firstly, because there have been very few such places, and, secondly, because of legal and economic difficulties to reach them, as has already been described in a preceding chapter. Of adopting modern methods of tillage he has never thought much, because with the exception of the few *zemstvo* and coöperative agencies and the still fewer government advisory committees, no one in Russia has ever sought to convey the necessary information to him, and even were he possessed of this information he could not apply it at all advantageously, under the conditions which prevailed in the Russian village. Search as hard as he might, aside from an increase in his landholding he could find nothing that offered hope of relief.

Then, too, the peasant loves the land—its freedom, spaciousness, beauty, of which he is very sensitive, as is illustrated in his songs and stories, buoy and exhilarate him. He speaks of the land in endearing terms—*matushka-zemlia,* mother earth, *poilitza,* drink-giver, and *kormilitza,* food-giver, are expressions that have become part of his everyday speech.

He loves the work in fields, as he loves no other kind of work. Besides, he has lived on land since days immemorial, and there is no other place where he feels so much at home and at ease. Moreover, all around him he sees landlords who have everything, enjoy everything, beautiful homes, elegant clothes, abundance of food; who ride in stately carriages, drawn by sprightly horses; whose children frolic at balls and dances, and gallop merrily about the country on horseback. The landlord, the peasant reasoned had everything, because he had much land. Anyone who had much land could be happy. Hence he was sure that increase in his holding would lift him to a higher level of living.

But does the peasant have any definite program of realizing his aim to take possession of the land? He has. Practically all Russian writers are agreed that the agrarian movement is moving in the direction of nationalization of land. This, they aver, is at any rate the purport of peasant utterances, whether in the form of a resolution at a congress or a speech in some representative assembly. The resolution adopted by the congress of the Peasant Union, in 1905, the first organization of its kind in Russian history having national significance, states: "To put an end to the sufferings of the people resulting from a shortage of land, is possible only by means of transferring all land to the possession of the nation for the

use of those who cultivate land with the labor of their own families or in a coöperative manner." The second congress of the Union passed a similar resolution with regard to the disposition of land. Of course this Union in its constituency represented only the petty peasant landholders and mainly those of Great Russia, where the communal form of ownership is universal, and not those of Ukraine where private ownership very largely prevails. But the spirit of the resolutions and debates of the Peasant Union is expressive of the entire Russian peasantry. "*Zemlia narodu*"—"the land to the people" is a universal slogan in rural Russia, as dear to the *mouzhik* in the north as in the south. The Ukrainian Rada in the "Universal" (manifesto) it issued on November 20, 1917, expressed itself in favor of the nationalization of the land. And the Peasant Soviet Congress, though made up largely of peasant intellectuals and members of the educated classes outside of the peasant population, was nevertheless expressing the feelings of the peasant masses in the resolution stating that "the elaboration of land reforms is to be based . . . on the transfer of all lands now belonging to the state, monasteries, churches, and private persons to the possession of the nation."

We must, however, distinguish between nationalization as understood by the peasant masses, and as

conceived by the various political parties and ideologists who advocate nationalization in one form or another. The latter mean by the word, either that the state shall own the land and rent it to the peasants, or that the state shall actually operate all land as one big industry, the peasant being merely a worker of the state. But what the peasant means, when he says that the land shall become the property of the nation, is that the nation shall acquire control of all the lands not worked by their owners and shall distribute them among those who till the soil with their own labor. The peasant does not favor nationalization in the sense that all the land, including his, shall revert to the ownership of the state. As Kautsky says: "Under no circumstances will they (the peasants) consent to turn their own land over to the possession of the state." Maslov speaking of the resolutions of the Peasant Union favoring nationalization of land, says that the petty landholders whom the Union represented "dream only of rendering inviolate their own individual ownership." And Lenine, the boldest champion of nationalization of land, is constrained to admit that nationalization does not mean to the peasant that the state shall operate the land as a vast industry. In his report of the proceedings of the unification congress of the various socialist (Marxian) parties, held in 1906, he says: "The partitionists (a section of the conference)

arguing against nationalization, tell me that the peasant does not want what he says he wants, when he speaks of nationalization. Judge not by the word but by the substance of the matter they say. The peasant wants private ownership, the right to sell his land, and the words 'God's land,' etc., are only a reflection of his desire to take the land away from the landlord. *All that is true, I replied to the partitionists.*" However, many of the leaders of the socialist revolutionary party resolutely deny that the peasant wishes to come into individual ownership of the land.

In connection with this hunger for land it is essential to point out the peasant's attitude toward the landlord. It is not, of course, one of friendship or good-will. The peasant has not yet forgotten the days of serfdom, when he was merely a piece of property in the hands of the nobles. In nearly every village there are men, now gray-haired and wrinkled, who vividly remember the days of serfdom, and who on Sundays and holidays, at family gatherings or village assemblies, delight in recounting their former experiences on the landed estates. However, to the credit of the peasant be it said, that he bears no grudge against the landlords for their past sins. He is not actuated by a desire to wreak vengeance for former misdeeds. In all of his complaints and appeals to the government he never spoke of these.

He is chiefly interested in removing present injustices—which to him means removing the landlords from the land, to which, as I have already emphasized, he believes they have no right, no more than to a monopoly of the air or water. He blames them chiefly for his own wretched condition. For a long time he was even under the impression that the Czar wished to give their land to him, and had issued a decree to that effect, but that they had stolen it and prevented its enactment. Moreover, he saw the landlords showered with privileges, and himself swamped with repressions. The officials favored them, the law favored them. Both oppressed him. All these conditions have bred in the *mouzhik* a feeling of deep-seated hostility toward the landlords, the holders of that precious possession which he thinks is his by right. He would fain be friends with them, if they would only turn their land over to him. If he at times resorts to violence, it is because he feels himself grossly abused by them, and sees no means of removing the grievance except through violent direct action.

Now that we have surveyed the conditions under which the peasant has been living, the ideas which these conditions have created, as exemplified in his attitude toward government, society, law, property, labor; now that we have learned of the desires and aspirations of the peasant, the inevitable conclusion

is forced upon us, that as far as he is concerned, the Russian Revolution never could be essentially a political event like the French, American, and the various mild English revolutions, but that in the very nature of things, it was destined to crystallize into a mighty crusade for fundamental radical social changes, or, to put it more concretely, into a social war, a class war, a war against the landlord class, and not merely against the autocratic régime. As a matter of fact the peasant would have gladly supported the Czar if Nicholas had had foresight and intelligence enough to enable him to realize his aspirations. The peasant has as yet manifested no keen hunger for political rights, not because he is averse to them, but because he has not yet come to appreciate their importance, and because he feels in a sort of mysterious way that a favorable reversal of his social and economic position will usher in a thoroughgoing improvement in every other phase of his life. As one of the delegates at the congress of the Peasant Union in 1905 exclaimed: "When we get land, we'll get everything else." That seems to be the prevalent feeling among the peasantry. At the congresses of the Peasant Union there were delegates, who indeed, spoke of the necessity of waging war for freedom as well as for land, but even these deputies, says V. Groman in his exhaustive summary of the work of these congresses, stressed

land above everything else. It is true, of course, that the slogan "Land and Freedom," as much as that of "Land to the People," has been the watchword of the agrarian movement in Russia. But the word freedom is used in a loose, hazy sense, and does not express any definite political or even cultural aims. Of these the peasant is only now beginning to think.

CHAPTER XI

BATTLING FOR LAND

STRANGE how revolutions occur! Many of us are under the conviction that they are the creation of leaders, agitators, who after insidious planning and plotting issue a secret order, and a revolution stalks forth in full blast like an army to battle when the command is given. Were this really so, were leaders so altogether omnipotent, there would scarcely be a community in the world but would be in the throes of perpetual revolution, for there is hardly a community, but harbors certain disaffected spirits who, for motives base or noble, would gladly disrupt the prevailing order of things. Fortunately, however, leaders can do nothing without followers—and it is only a truism to say that there can be no followers, unless there is a cause and a will to follow. Now leaders may be instrumental in rousing this will, in transmuting it into burning words, in formulating it into concrete issues, but they can neither create nor destroy it. Who ever thinks of the American revolution as being chiefly the accomplishment of George Washington, Patrick Henry and the other valiant spirits of the colonial days? It was not they, their

will, that made the American revolution; it was the American revolution that made them. If their pleadings and exhortations had not been the verbal expressions of the sentiments and desires of the embittered colonists, they could no more have stirred and led them into a crusade against the mother-country, than they could set an iceberg aflame. And who ever can think of the overthrow of the Czar in March, 1917, as the feat of a group of clever conspirators, leaders of revolutionary parties? The March revolution was as much a surprise to these leaders as it was to the outside world. A real revolution, a rising of the masses, is an event of spontaneous social combustion. The spark may be thrust from above, but the explosion always occurs below, and, of course, there never can be an explosion unless there are chemicals to explode.

This at any rate is true of the peasant revolutions in Russia. Some of these have since been identified with names of leaders, just as some military victories in history have been linked with the names of generals, though long ago Tolstoy has pointed out in "War and Peace," that it is soldiers who always win battles. Not the least striking feature of the peasant revolutions is the fact that leaders have been able to lead in so far and as long as they have followed the desires of their constituents. Their personal character, social position, religious affilia-

tions, have not interested the peasant. He has been chiefly concerned with their aims. If these tallied with his own, he clung to them with all the zest and desperation of a zealot.

The first and one of the most sanguinary peasant revolutions occurred in 1669–1670. It was led by Stenka Razin, now a national hero, beloved by all the peasants in the Volga region, his name and deeds hallowed in a multitude of songs and stories and soon to be commemorated in a statue at Moscow.

Stenka Razin was a cossack. In 1665 he and his two brothers participated in a military campaign against Poland under the command of Yurii Dolgoruki. The oldest Razin was the chief of the cossack division. One day he appeared before Yurii Dolgoruki and asked for the release of his men who yearned to go back to their haunts on the Don. Being volunteer soldiers, like all the cossacks of the time, the cossack chief was quite within his rights in petitioning for the release of his division. Dolgoruki, however, denied the petition, whereupon Razin left of his own accord. He was searched, apprehended, hanged. It is reported that Stenka and Frol Razin witnessed the execution of their older brother. Stenka was outraged. His brother—cossack hetman—strung up on a tree like a dog for exercising the inalienable right of a free warrior, a free man! Not only was his brotherly love wounded, his cossack

pride was stabbed, and he vowed that he should avenge the cruel deed of Yurii Dolgoruki. He would punish the *boyars* and *voyevodas*—nobles and rulers of the time, who had arrogated unto themselves all political power, and were exercising it with contemptuous indifference for the rights and conveniences of others. Stenka resolved to strip them of this power.

But how was he to do this? He was an obscure cossack. He had no following, and no wealth, no prestige with which to attract one.

Here his instinct for leadership came into play. He was, indeed, a shrewd, far-seeing politician. He heard the rumble of discontent reverberate from one end of the country to the other—it was only a few years after the fettering of the peasant to the land and to the will of the nobles. He saw with what ferocity the latter were treating the newly-made serf. He saw the *mouzhik* fleeing in the thousands from bondage, hiding in woods, fields, river-banks, living on loot and plunder, forming into bands and marching forth often in clear daylight to vent hot wrath upon their oppressors. He saw castles abandoned to the torch, their owners strung up on trees, their heads chopped off. He saw the spirit of rebellion, rapine, murder, stalk through the land, and he resolved to capitalize the forces behind it for his own ends.

The historian Kostomarov assures us that Stenka was not ambitious, that he coveted neither political power nor material aggrandizement. Nor on the other hand was he at all actuated by altruistic motives. He was no idealist. The sufferings of the peasant did not stir him to compassion. He was in fact a man without sympathy for his fellow-mortals. It was like play for him to chop off a man's leg or arm, or to thrust a hook into his ribs and hoist him up a pole. He was no villain, but his manner and conduct were at times shockingly savage. The only reason he resolved to make the liberation of the peasant his cause, was because he wanted an army of crusaders against the nobles, and the peasant was ripe for such a crusade.

His magnificent personality was an invaluable asset to him. Tall, massive, powerful, with glinting eyes, of indomitable will-power, keen ingenuity, with not a shadow of fear in him, he commended the admiration of both friend and enemy. A man of many and varied moods, now gay, now gloomy, now given to dissipation, now sunk in reverie, contemptuous of religion, of law, of social restraint, without honor in his dealings with the enemy, he was, nevertheless, always truthful and generous to friends and supporters. He was commanding, but never haughty; severe, but never imposing. Withal he was very democratic. Caste

he despised. In days of greatest triumph he lived in a sod-hut like the other cossacks, ate the food they ate, wore the clothes they wore, though he had booty enough to wallow in luxury.

He opened his campaign cautiously as though groping his way to the most promising path of pursuit. His initial exploit was an act of pure piracy. With a small band of cossacks he captured a fleet of supply and prison barges on the Volga. The captain of the fleet and all the officers including a monk who was guard of certain church supplies, he unceremoniously drowned. The crews and the party of exiles that were on their way to serve sentences in the Astrakhan jails, he immediately liberated, and addressed them in the following words:

"I extend to you full freedom. I shall not compel any of you to abide with me. But whoever wants to join me, shall become a free cossack. I have come to wage war only against the boyars and the rich. I am prepared to divide everything with the poor and common people."

These words soon spread like wildfire and caused joyous commotion in serf-Russia. It seemed as though the serf had been eagerly waiting for someone to address to him such a message, and now that it was uttered he was ready to burst into action. At last a redeemer had arisen sent by God to punish and overthrow the landlord-tyrants, and to give to

him freedom, land, riches—the things he coveted so deeply! From all over the country, from farm, forest, jail, barracks, he fled to enlist in Stenka's ranks. He worshiped the cossack chief, called him affectionately Little Father, trusted implicitly in his wisdom, and believed whole-heartedly in his good luck and superhuman powers. Stenka's fame spread rapidly, and his strength grew greater from day to day.

We read and hear much these days of propaganda. To the average American it is a new word with a sinister meaning and rightly so, in view of the dastardly purposes to which the organs of publicity have been put. Propaganda, however, is an ancient weapon, as old as the greed and goodness of man. Stenka Razin was surely a master of it. Astute, clear-sighted, with a profound understanding of the workings of the human imagination, he fully appreciated the power of the weapon of publicity, of making known to the peasant the aims of his campaign, and he spared no effort to wield this weapon as strenuously and extensively as circumstances permitted. He organized a corps of so-called agitators and dispatched them far and wide to proclaim his message to the peasant population. "We come," these emissaries said, "from our little father Stepan Timofeyevitch to destroy your *voyevodas* and to set you free," words which could not but inspire to action the chafing fettered *mouzhik*. Stenka also

composed proclamations, letters, as they were then called, explaining the object of his crusade, and he had them smuggled into serf-communities on big estates and read to the peasants. They were like lighted matches dropped into inflammable substances. The peasants banded together, pounced upon their masters, destroyed their homes, seized movable property and then marched in a body to join Stenka's forces. Everywhere the peasant welcomed the signal to rise in rebellion against the landlord-nobles.

Whenever Stenka moved to attack a village or city he always had his emissaries precede him. In bolshevik-like fashion they sought to acquaint the opposing army and the population in enemy territory with the purpose of his campaign, and to persuade both soldier and civilian to turn upon their superiors. In such a manner Stenka won his greatest victory—the conquest of the rich city of Astrakhan. He advanced upon the city in barges, and before he was even within attacking distance of the opposing army his propagandists had already filtered their way into the ranks of the latter, and were zealously spreading the message that Stenka was their redeemer, that he was coming to liberate them from the oppression of the nobles, and that if they would join him, they could easily capture the city of Astrakhan, and all the wealth there would

be theirs to divide and enjoy as they pleased. The message electrified the enemy soldiers, who were as a rule peasants or of peasant origin. They seized their officers, tied, strangled, and flung them into the Volga. When Stenka drew near, they shouted: "We greet you, little father, the subduer of all our tyrants." To which Stenka replied: "I greet you, brothers! Revenge yourselves upon your tormentors, who have made you suffer worse than had the Turks and Tartars. I have come to grant you liberties and privileges. You are my brothers, my children, and you shall be as rich as I am, if you remain brave and faithful to me." Uproarious joy greeted these words, which when they reached the city, conveyed there by special messengers, stirred the poor into ecstacy. House-maids, cooks, janitors, street-cleaners, coachmen, barge-haulers, water-carriers, all those who were of the servant class, men and women, made common cause and launched into a fierce crusade against their masters and rulers, tied, lashed, stabbed them, sparing neither women, nor children, nor even priests. They swarmed round public buildings—jails, court-houses, military offices—smashed doors and windows, broke inside, hurled piles of documents into the street, set them ablaze, and danced hilariously around the flames as did the revolutionaries in Petrograd in March, 1917. When Stenka moved

into the city it was already in possession of the mobs, and in accordance with his custom on such occasions he announced to his followers that they could do whatever they pleased, a privilege of which they proceeded to take immediate advantage. They moved into the homes of the rich, dressed in their garments, ate of their food, quaffed their wines, danced in their halls, rode in their carriages, and married even their daughters and wives. The latter dared not resist, and those that did, paid with their lives. A more complete reversal of social relationships than that which followed in the city of Astrakhan after its seizure by the serf-element can hardly be conceived. This was the first instance in Russian history when the so-called lower classes, or proletarians, as we should call them in modern terminology, gained complete control of a big rich city.

Stenka's victories caused a panic among the nobles and officials. Town after town capitulated to the cossack leader of the rebellion. Armies sent against him were persuaded to join him and turn against their commanders. Even in Moscow, the citadel of bureaucracy and landlordism, voices rose counselling the government to throw open the gates to the rebels and to welcome Stenka with bread and salt.

These seditious utterances intensified the terror of

the landlord-nobles. The spirit of insurrection was creeping into the capitol, the very seat of their power, and threatened to devour the very foundation of their authority and safety! To combat the revolution they not only hastened to mobilize a powerful army, but also opened a vigorous propaganda campaign against Stenka Razin, so as to blast the moral support he was everywhere gaining among the peasant population. They knew how loyal the peasant was to the Czar, and how devoted he was to the church, so they proclaimed Stenka a foe of both, a traitor and a heathen. Priests denounced him as the antichrist, Satan incarnate, luring the ignorant into perfidy and damnation. In such manner the officials and landlords had hoped to cause mutiny in his ranks and to hasten the collapse of the rebel movement.

But they thoroughly misjudged the psychology of the peasant, even as so many foreign diplomats to-day have misjudged it, much to their own discomfiture and often disaster and shame. Being of a concrete turn of mind with only elementary perceptions of life, with no political or racial or social traditions, the peasant has always gladly rallied around leaders who were waging wars for his emancipation regardless of the racial origin, political professions and religious affiliations of these leaders, regardless even of their personal character. The serfs

then as well as the *mouzhik* of to-day have judged their leaders not by what others have said of them, but by what they know of their aims and activities from their personal contact with them. Stenka might be a heathen, a traitor, but wherever he conquered territory, he liberated serfs, gave them land and booty, allowed them to attend to their own administrative affairs. That the peasant knew, and that rendered him impervious to the "counter-revolutionary" appeals of Stenka's enemies.

Stenka, however, felt the need of striking back at the propaganda of his foes. He would not run the risk of their being able at some unforeseen time to convert their accusations into a rallying slogan against him. He countered their attacks upon him by announcing that he was not fighting against the offices of the Czar and the church, but against the nobility and against all who were in league with the nobility. The ruling Czar, he accused, was in league with them, the ruling priests were in their hire. Both Czar and priest were corrupt, cruel—enemies of the people. He would put a new Czar upon the throne and a new patriarch at the head of the church. He would lift into power the Czar's son, who was falsely reported dead, who had only fled from the tyranny of his father but was now in his (Stenka's) care. The Czarevitch, he announced, was a friend of the people, and as such would welcome the exter-

mination of nobles and officials so as to pave the way for the liberation of the serfs. He also promised to place at the head of the church the deposed patriach Nikon, a man of God, and a lover of the people.

The propaganda of the officials and landlords fell upon barren soil. The peasant remained attached to Stenka.

The revolution swept all of southern Russia in the Don and Volga basins, and spread swiftly northward. Everywhere the peasant welcomed Stenka Razin as a redeemer, a saviour, and Stenka did all in his power in word and act, to retain the faith the *mouzhik* had reposed in him. He shared his booty with his followers and treated them all alike, as equals.

For over a year his crusade rocked Russia. Mobs of infuriated peasants swept over the fertile plains, sacked estates, burned castles, devastated cities and villages, murdered thousands of thousands of landlords and officials. Sooner or later, however, the movement was destined to collapse. In fact the larger it grew the weaker it became. Its chief defect was the absence of a well-built central organism, that could direct and coördinate its activities at the front, in the rear and in the enemy's camps. Because of that the rebels had no well-disciplined, properly-trained army; they lacked war supplies, and, what

was equally fatal, good military leaders. Stenka's subordinates were brave fighters but mediocre generals. In the end the Moscow government strangled the revolution. Stenka and his brother Frol were captured. Put in chains and hitched to a lumbering cart, they were led on foot over the public thoroughfares, to the capitol, exhibited to the populace in their punishment and ignominy as a warning to would-be defiers of established authority of what would happen to them, should they venture to follow in the footsteps of the cossack rebels. Frol complained of his tortures and wept. But not Stenka. He was stoic, never muttered a word of complaint. Limb after limb was slowly sevéred from his body, his bones were broken one by one, his hands and feet were twisted and turned and wrenched and chopped off; water, now hot, now cold, now salted, was poured alternately over his bleeding flesh—all in an effort to wring a confession of guilt from him. But he would make no confession, conscious to the end that he had committed no wrong. The only words he spoke during those hours of excruciating torture were words of admonition to his brother Frol for being so weak and womanish in his sufferings. At last in accordance with the barbarous custom of the times he was quartered alive.

The spirit of rebellion, however, did not die in the peasant. It lay smouldering in him and whenever

an opportune occasion came it flared up again in blazing fury. A century later such an occasion arose. It was in the reign of Katherine the second, and the empress herself unwittingly supplied the spark that set the fuel of rebellion aflame. She, as is known, had abolished compulsory military service for nobles. Now the peasant had somehow imbibed the fantastic notion that the reason he was turned into a serf was, because the Czar was so poor that he had no way of compensating the nobles for their services other than through serf-labor, and he believed devoutly that as soon as other means of remunerating the nobles should be discovered, serfdom would be abolished. Therefore, when Katherine no longer required the nobles to render army service to the state, the peasant demanded his liberation. He saw no reason why it was necessary that he should continue in bondage to the nobles when it was no longer necessary to compensate them for special service. He cried out for freedom, and his cry was constantly growing louder and more ominous. Katherine and the nobles sought to stifle this cry by force and to bring the peasant to submission. But—far away in the wilds of the Orenbourg steppes a cossack had heard it and it was sweet music to his ears.

Yemelyan Pougatchev was the cossack's name—a name well known in Russian history. Tall, stately, with shaggy eyebrows, overhanging deepset cunning

eyes, of obscure origin, entirely illiterate, of dissolute habits, valiant, sagacious, dauntless, bred in the cossack tradition of hate against tyrannous restraints, he, like Stenka, despised the nobles and officials of Russia, but unlike Stenka he was animated by a big personal ambition. He dreamed of ascending the throne, a goal he could not attain until after he had overpowered the nobles. A master psychologist he seized upon the current spirit of unrest among the serfs and played upon it so skillfully, that his ranks soon swelled with thousands of followers and he launched his campaign against the established rulers. To make himself more acceptable to the peasant he announced that he was none other than Peter the third whom his wife Katherine was supposed to have ordered murdered. He proclaimed that the nobles and the empress had sought his death, because he had proposed to abolish serfdom by offering to compensate the nobles with a certain amount of specie for losses they might sustain through the deprivation of serf-labor. Fortunately, he explained, he eluded the assassins and escaped, and now that he, the only rightful claimant to the throne, was free once more, he would wage pitiless war against the cruel empress and the nobles, and, wherever victorious, he would abolish serfdom and distribute the land and other possessions of his enemies among the serfs.

Pougatchev's message stirred the peasant. Liberty and Land! These he was promised by a new saviour. Of course he would fight under Pougatchev—fight until death!

From the Urals to Saratov, Russia was once more convulsed with rebellion. Serfs from everywhere fled to Pougatchev's quarters and joined his armies. Thousands upon thousands of manors were burned, their owners hideously tortured and put to death. Armies sent against the rebel-forces were hurled back and often were actually won over by skillful propaganda. The Moscow government for a long time seemed helpless and was threatened with annihilation. Pougatchev, of course, realizing that his success depended upon the faith of the serf in his mission, abolished serfdom in conquered territory, and, true to his word, he divided the possessions of the landlords among his followers. Subordinates whom he caught appropriating disproportionately large shares of booty he summarily put to death. In outward appearance, in word and in act, Pougatchev betrayed nothing of his far-reaching personal ambitions. He conducted himself like a true crusader for the rights of the bondaged peasant.

The Pougatchev rebellion, however, like that of Stenka Razin, suffering from a lack of trained organizers, lacking a powerful centralized war-machine, was destined to collapse. The Moscow govern-

ment in the end crushed it. Pougatchev was apprehended. A weaker man than Stenka Razin he broke down under torture and made a full confession of his plot. That, however, did not save him—he, too, was quartered alive.

Thus ended the mightiest two insurrections of the Russian peasant prior to the revolution of 1905.

In these insurrections we clearly discern the underlying general tendency of the peasant revolutionary movement, its fundamental aims and purposes and methods. It has been first and foremost a struggle against landlords, a class struggle indeed, bitter and ferocious. Whatever the immediate or exciting cause, whether it be the personal tyranny of the landlord, or high prices of rent, or low prices of labor, or unendurable usury; whatever the mode of warfare whether outright killing of the landlord, or lashing, imprisonment, or destruction of his estate, or all of these combined; whatever the period in history whether before or during or after the emancipation, in the seventeenth or in the twentieth centuries, the fundamental goal of the rebellious peasant has always been the same—the winning of land and freedom.

Though in the interval between the Pougatchev uprising and the Revolution of 1905 there was no nation-wide insurrection of peasants, yet scarcely a year passed but was marked by sanguinary up-

risings here and there in various sections of the country. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs between the years of 1835–54, 144 landlords were killed by mutinous peasants, and in the interval of 1835–44, 298 peasant men and 118 women were banished to Siberia for assassinating their masters. During and following the Crimean war practically the whole of serf-Russia was seething with local revolts, which necessitated the use of military arms to quell. During 1861–63 immediately after the emancipation proclamation was made public, the peasant, disappointed with the concession doled to him, mutinied once more. Then a lull followed, and beginning with 1870 insurrections on a large scale broke out again, due entirely to the growing economic crisis following upon the increase in population without corresponding increase in material resources. As the economic crisis gained in intensity, as land-shortage increased, quantity of live-stock decreased, and famine became more periodic and more widespread, discontent mounted higher and uprisings grew more rampant and more violent. Beginning with the twentieth century the spirit of unrest swept all peasant Russia in Europe, Caucasus and Siberia The government and the nobles treated outbursts of revolt not as a desperate search after material self-satisfaction, but as acts of wickedness, punishable by imprisonment and violence, and that only deep-

ened the exasperation of the *mouzhik*. In 1903-4 the Russian village was a veritable smouldering volcano of unrest, and occasional spurts of revolutionary fire and lava wrought havoc on numerous estates. Matters were gradually moving to a climax.

In all of these manifestations of mutiny we must note the absence of formal revolutionary organizations in the village, and for the most part also the absence of revolutionary leaders. Agitators of various shades of political opinion were not lacking, but at best they only accelerated the process of revolutionary activity. In fact when agitators had first made their appearance in the village in the seventies, the peasant looked upon them with distrust and scorn, drove them from the villages and often actually turned them over to the police. In his "Virgin Soil" Turgenev draws a masterful picture of the early activities of revolutionary propagandists in the village and the attitude of the peasant toward them.

Then came the Revolution of 1905. The uprisings of the peasant were a surprise to the revolutionary parties as much as to the government, for though all knew that the peasant had been in a rebellious mood, none had reckoned upon the widespread, determined war which he had suddenly launched against the landlords. Not in 130 years, since the days of Pougatchev, had there been such commotion

and riotousness in rural Russia. With every conceivable weapon at hand the peasant hurled himself upon his ancient enemy—burned castles, hay and grain-stacks, seized produce, stock, implements, and land. Particularly desperate and sanguinary were the uprisings against landlords who offered resistance. In the Baltic sections where the Lettish peasant is better educated and better organized, and where the German barons were notoriously the most ruthless landlords in Russia, the battles the peasant fought were the bloodiest of the entire Revolution.

The Revolution of 1905 in city and village failed. But the government realized the menace of the rebellious village, and to ward off future outbreaks, it proceeded to introduce reforms. The legal position of the peasant was somewhat improved. Even before the Revolution, on March 25th, 1903, the collective responsibility of the *mir* for each individual taxpayer was abolished. On the 24th of August of the same year, corporal punishment was likewise done away with. After the Revolution a few other concessions were granted. The peasant was admitted to higher schools of education, and to various branches of government service, from which he had been previously barred. The authority of the *Zemsky* Nachalnik over him was curbed, nominally at least, and the processes of procuring a passport were simplified. On the other hand, the old district

courts, juggling balls in the hands of intriguing officials and landlords, remained unchanged, and the *mir* as formerly had the right to exile a member to Siberia without trial, while corporal punishment was practiced despite its abolition by law; and, furthermore, the *Zemsky* Nachalnik continued to exercise his powers of coercion and intimidation.

More interesting was the new economic policy of the government, fathered by the astute Stolypin. His aim was to render impotent the revolutionary movement in the village, and to achieve this he resolved to break up the commune so as to destroy the social unity of the peasant and thus prevent concerted action, and also to create a class of prosperous peasant land proprietors, who in defense of their economic interests would gravitate to the support of the landlords and the government against the poor and rebellious peasant. To this end he promulgated the now famous and elaborate homestead act, according to which a peasant might upon application separate himself from the commune, build up a homestead, and enjoy all the privileges and comforts that go with individual ownership of land.

If the government had thrown open vast areas of new lands to the peasant, free, or at a small price, Stolypin's scheme might have proved successful. The peasant would have acquired a homestead, grown attached to it, and might have forgotten the

Revolution. But since the area of land available for homestead purposes was very limited, Stolypin's policy could not but result in failure. In all, 2,400,000 heads of families applied for permission to separate from the commune, though government officials, by all manner of tricks, sought to stimulate separation from the *mir* and thus hasten its break-up. These applicants, however, were mostly from provinces that had only been recently colonized, or where, owing to the lay of the land, homesteading had proved to be more desirable, and on that account the commune had not struck deep roots there. There were fifteen such provinces out of a total of fifty in European Russia, and they furnished sixty per cent of the applicants for homesteads. Not all applicants actually established homesteads. Slightly more than half did not. They merely hastened to establish their right to the private ownership of land, so as to be in a position to sell it. Only 1,140,000 heads of families had built homesteads. But many of these soon discovered that owing to shortage in land their separation from the commune was a decided disadvantage. They had neither woodland, nor pasture, nor tillable land sufficient to raise summer feed for their stock and bread for themselves. In consequence many of them were compelled to dispose of a portion of their stock, and in the case of the Russian peasant diminution of number of heads of stock always

leads to economic deterioration. During the last few years prior to the Revolution there was a tendency on the part of many homesteaders to return to the commune, while the number of applicants for separation had slumped heavily. In 1915 it was only one-seventh of what it had been in 1908, the year in which the homestead act had proved most popular.

Stolypin's scheme, then, while it benefitted greatly a small number of peasants, failed on the whole to bring relief to the vast bulk of the peasantry. Fully seventy per cent of them continued to suffer from land-shortage and all that the term implies.

CHAPTER XII

THE CADETS AND THE PEASANTS

The war greatly aggravated the agrarian crisis in Russia, for reasons that are quite obvious to anyone familiar with the economic life of that country. In the first place the mobilization of about eighteen million soldiers drained seriously the supply of labor. Secondly, the war caused an acute shortage of agricultural implements and materials for repair. Harnessed to war purposes, Russia's industries greatly curtailed the manufacture of farm tools, scanty even under normal conditions. At the same time, it was exceedingly difficult to import them, for Germany from whom before the war Russia was buying large quantities of agricultural machinery—of plows alone forty-three per cent of the entire supply—was cut off. As for the other industrial nations, especially of the Allied group, they were inconveniently removed from Russia, and with the blockade in operation in the Baltic and in the Dardanelles, commercial relations with them became exceedingly difficult. Besides, their output of agricultural implements was materially reduced by the war. Not having new machinery the peasant continued to use his old

dilapidated tools, which he could not even repair, because proper material was lacking. A third cause contributing to the new agrarian crisis was the decrease of live-stock in the village. The best horses were drafted into the army, and cattle the *mouzhik* was tempted to sell because of the inordinately high prices. Under these circumstances acute suffering was imminent. True, the peasant possessed more money than ever before, but it was paper money—metal coins had practically disappeared from circulation—and its value was constantly diminishing because of the constantly rising prices. In reality the peasant was growing poorer—he was disposing of a large portion of his principal, and his paper money could not buy kerosene, iron, leather, oils, sugar. The longer the war lasted the poorer he became. Add to this the personal sorrows that visited tens of thousands of families in the countryside as a result of the war, and we can easily understand how thoroughly prepared the peasant was for a revolution.

He welcomed the March upheaval with joy. It meant to him the immediate possibility of realizing his long-cherished dream of coming into full possession of the land. All other problems shrank in importance before the one of expropriating the *pomiestchiks*. The industrial collapse, the military disasters, the necessity of pooling together all available resources and energies and of forgetting

personal aims and ambitions, if victory over Germany was to be achieved, did not stir him. He cared not so much for victory over Germany as for the conquest of the landlords, for of what good, he reasoned, was to him the defeat of Germany, if the landlords remained in power and in possession of the land? He lost interest in the external war and centered his attention upon the internal readjustment. This was evidenced in his refusal to release stored grains for the market, when nothing but paper money was offered as payment, by his refusal to pay taxes, by his indifference to the liberty loans which the Provisional Government had floated, and still more flagrantly by the spontaneous widespread seizure of landlords' estates, all of which tended further to disrupt the already shattered economic organism of the country.

The Russian newspapers for that period printed long and detailed accounts of these so-called agrarian disturbances. Judging from these accounts there was on the whole comparatively little destruction of life and property. The reason for this was that the landlords in the absence of military forces to defend them, offered scarcely any resistance, and that the peasant was animated not as much by a desire to wreak vengeance as by a wish to possess himself of the land. That does not mean that the crusade against the landlords did not involve attacks

upon life and property. In many places mansions were demolished, barns burned, household effects, from furniture to linen, paintings, pianos, libraries, torn, smashed, and set on fire. Considering, however, the magnitude and character of the movement there was, upon the whole, less violence than might have been expected.

How then did the various political parties who were bidding for the support of the peasant propose to solve this most burning of all domestic problems? Upon the correct solution of this problem hinged not merely the success of these parties, but the fortunes of the Revolution. Without the support of the peasant no party, however rich its intellectual resources and however abundant its active energies, could possibly remain in power or wield marked political influence, and no task of national magnitude, however laudable its aim, could possibly be executed. Though not the initiating and immediately directing force in Russian political life, the peasant, nevertheless, is the determining factor. For any political party to leave the peasant out of the reckoning or to reckon with him insufficiently, is to invite disaster.

The first party that ascended to power after the Czar was overthrown, were the Cadets, Constitutional Democrats. Not all the ministers in the new Cabinet were Cadets. Three were Octobrists, former supporters of the autocracy and avowed

monarchists. One, Kerensky, was a socialist. The Cadets, however, held seven, a majority of the portfolios. Professor Paul Milyukov, the founder of the party and its most brilliant exponent, became Minister of Foreign Affairs, which was the most delicate and important office. He was the leading spirit in the Cabinet—its very constituency was largely the result of his labors—so that many writers and public men refer to it as the Milyukov Ministry.

What was or rather is the agrarian program of the Cadets? To gain a clear and comprehensive as well as sympathetic conception of it, it is necessary to give a brief survey of the origin of the party, its constituency, its political aims, and its past activities.

The party was founded in 1905 by Milyukov. Originally it was made up of college professors, publicists, lawyers, *zemstvo*-workers, liberal noblemen, small shopkeepers, business-men and all other elements to whom autocracy was either economically or intellectually intolerable, and to whom the radicalism of the other opposition parties, all socialist of various shades, was repugnant. After the March Revolution, when the monarchist parties had lost the very foundation of their existence, the Cadets absorbed them, too.

The outstanding feature of the Cadet philosophy of government—parliamentarism—is the political

expression of the economic interests and the social ideology of the elements that make up the party. On the one hand are the intellectuals—teachers, publicists, lawyers, men of an academic stamp of mind, students of parliamentary institutions and constitutional forms of government, and by traditions, habits of thought, temperament and training, averse to violent changes in government. They are not of the masses, nor even in close contact with them, but are earnestly interested in their welfare. In a parliamentary form of government, preferably a constitutional monarchy, in the slow solid development of a parliamentary state, patterned more or less after the Anglo-Saxon model, they see a panacea for all Russia's ills. They are sticklers for legality and regularity. Though they advocate many advanced social measures such as an eight-hour labor day, social insurance, progressive inheritance and income taxes, and other measures of a similar nature, they insist that these must be inaugurated only in a legal manner, after a constitution has been adopted and government machinery set up. In other words, they condition the fulfillment of their social reforms upon the attainment of their political goal. Direct action of any nature, they deprecate. On the other hand, are the commercial classes who chafed under the restraints of the old government, which hampered them seriously in their promotion of industry

and commerce. In political liberties, in the slow growth of a parliamentary state, in the gradual orderly transition from one system of government to the other, they see an opportunity to develop and expand Russian trade and industry without the serious interruptions and catastrophic setbacks incident to a violent reversal of existing institutions.

It is quite natural, then, that the Cadets should exhibit a dread of the Revolution, with its direct mass action. Ever since the founding of their party, the Cadets have striven to bring the opposition to the old government under their control, to temper its passion and prevent it from hazardous and violent action. They were ever ready to welcome the smallest concession granted by the government—rather than resort to revolutionary action to obtain substantial reforms. They cheerfully accepted Minister Bulygin's project for a consultative Duma, which was only a sop to an aroused people. Their argument was that once the principle of parliamentarism was recognized, even though its embodiment was inadequate, they would be in a position ultimately to transform the imperfect institution in accordance with their own conceptions. Only when the first Duma was dissolved and their hopes were shattered, did the Cadets exhibit a genuine revolutionary spirit, which was manifest in the Voborg manifesto calling upon the people to refuse to pay

taxes and to resist drafting into the army. But that was only an outburst of momentary rage, a flitting gesture of desperation, and not a genuine change of tactical principles, for soon after that they slumped into a position of acquiescence. When the second Duma was dismissed and the election laws were so manipulated as to permit a small class of landlords to control a majority of the deputies, the Cadets bowed in submission. And though the third Duma was a mere hollow shell of a parliament, they strove desperately to save it from the fate of its predecessor. They compromised, capitulated, swallowed insults, all in order to save the Duma. Better an impotent Duma, than no Duma at all, they argued.

Their dread of revolution was even more vividly expressed in their attitude toward the March upheaval. Several months before the occurrence of that epochal event, when the rumble of discontent was constantly gaining in volume, Milyukov said: "If a revolution is necessary to bring about victory (over Germany) I do not want victory." And later just a short time before the coming of the Revolution, when provocateurs spread the rumor that Milyukov was going about the factories of Petrograd counselling the workers to revolt, he issued a statement vogorously denying the rumor and then emphasized the fact that he had not the least sympathy with activities imputed to him. When the Revolu-

tion finally heaved into being, sudden, spontaneous, leaderless, Milyukov was in despair. "In fifteen minutes," he said watching the surging crowds in the streets, "it will be squashed in blood," and had he possessed the power he would have persuaded the frantic mobs to disperse and he would have blotted out from their minds the very thought of Revolution. Only after the soldiers and cossacks dispatched to suppress the rebellious populace had joined in the processions, and it became evident that the old régime was a mere corpse, requiring merely to have its remains removed; only when the Revolution was an accomplished fact did Milyukov and his colleagues in the Duma change front and welcome the unbidden and much dreaded visitor.

The Duma being the only more or less popular organization in existence, assumed charge of affairs, elected a provisional committee which in turn chose the Cabinet, virtually putting the Cadets, then the most influential party in the Duma, at the helm of the new government. The coming of the Cadets into power was, therefore, nothing more than a happy accident—there was no one else, no party, no organization, no institution at that time prepared to dispute the authority of the Duma.

And when the Cadets came into power their dread of the Revolution was undiminished, and they strove to press its course into the channel of their

political conceptions. According to A. A. Bublikov, a prominent conservative member of the Duma, who practically of his own accord had seized control of the railroads and had thereby paralyzed all activities of the old régime, and who was chairman of the committee that made the Czar a prisoner, when Milyukov was asked what would be the program of the new ministry he replied, "Of course the program of the bloc." The bloc was a coalition of all political parties in the Duma excepting the extremes of either end, who had agreed, says Bublikov, "upon quite a moderate program for the purpose of waging a parliamentary struggle against the Czar's ministry." In other words, the weapon which the Cadets had used against the Czar, they now intended to make the program for Russia after the Czar was overthrown.

Not only had the Cadets embraced a policy which no longer possessed vitality, they stubbornly fought for the preservation of the monarchy, for the perpetuation of the throne and the office of the Czar. What they wanted was not a republic but a constitutional monarchy with a parliament and a ministry responsible to it, modelled largely after the British form of government.

How the urban masses viewed the effort to save the dynasty is best illustrated in the following two incidents. In his book the "Russian Revolution,"

Bublikov tells of an address delivered before an audience of railroad workers in Petrograd by Guchkov, Minister of War in the first Provisional Government, upon his return from the trip he made to obtain the act of abdication from Nicholas Romanov. After reading the act of abdication, Guchkov exclaimed, "Long live Emperor Michael the second." (Michael was the Czar's brother.) "The workingmen," says Bublikov, "grew furious and closing their shops they announced their firm determination to destroy the act and to lynch Guchkov." With great difficulty a railroad official succeeded in keeping the workers from carrying out their resolution. Milyukov had a somewhat similar experience. When he appeared in the big Duma hall to announce the formation of the new Cabinet, he stated that Grand Duke Michael would become the regent and the former Czar's son Alexey the heir to the throne. A storm of protest broke loose. On all sides were heard shouts, "Down with the Romanovs! Down with the Grand Dukes! Down with the dynasty! We want no monarchs! Long live the republic!" The soldiers were especially hostile, "What does it mean?" they argued, "we have fought and fought and fought and he wants to thrust a monarch upon our necks!" They pelted Milyukov with sharp questions, their indignation and anger growing more intense. At last to pacify them Milyukov felt

obliged to explain that he was merely expressing his own personal opinion, which was not at all binding upon the country.

Whatever, therefore, one may think of the Cadet political program, the indisputable fact is, that there is almost an unbridgeable chasm between the Cadets and the masses. The Cadets are scholars, saturated with western political thought and tradition, advocates of western especially Anglo-Saxon political institutions, averse to revolutionary tactics under all circumstances, bent upon subjecting the evolution of Russia to their formulas, whereas the masses do not even understand the language of the Cadets, have as yet cultivated no regard for constitutional formalities, are impelled in their thoughts and actions by their immediate wants, and are ready to resort to any method available, however desperate, to attain their goal. No wonder that E. J. Dillon, a conservative writer, with utter contempt for Russian radicalism, is constrained to say: "The Cadets who deserved their reputation of being the best organized party in the Empire, had not firm hold on the nation, because they were not of it, they could not place themselves at its angle of vision, were incapable of appreciating its world-philosophy, were not rooted in the people. Hence they did not enlist the peasant and the workingman in their party and stood only for themselves."

From all that has been said above it would be logical to infer that the agrarian program of the Cadets would not correspond with the wishes of the peasant. Let us examine it. It can be divided into two parts, one dealing with temporary measures to be adopted before the summoning of the Constituent Convention, the other presenting a final solution of the land problem to be adopted by the National Convention that was to settle all the fundamental problems of the nation.

As regards the temporary measures they were intended chiefly to preserve peace in the village, to prevent seizures of land, confiscation of live-stock, grains, machinery and other property. The landlords were to remain in possession of their land, the peasant of his. Land committees, local and national, were to arbitrate any differences that might arise between landlord and peasant as regards rentals, wages of labor and other matters of conflict, and were in general to help the peasant "pull through" until the convocation of the Constituent. The right of private property was to remain inviolate, and landlords might sell and mortgage their land or do with it anything else they pleased.

It was wise, indeed, on the part of the Cadets to seek to prevent anarchy in the village. But the most tactful and determined land-committees in the world could not possibly have averted it as long as the

landlords continued to enjoy the right of sale or mortgage. The poor peasant especially would have rebelled against this right for he could not watch with composure any transfer of land to any city folks, rich peasants or foreign syndicates. He would have regarded such acts as an attempt on the part of the landlords to deprive him of what he thought was his by all the moral rights of possession. Furthermore, new sales and mortgages would have created new claims, new disputes, for the Constituent to settle. In case of foreign investors, there surely would have been many of them, for the landlords, in fear of unfavorable action in the Constituent, would have hastened to bargain off their estates to any possessors of ready cash, many of whom in Russia were foreigners or had foreign financial connections; the Constituent might be face to face with a delicate international problem in trying to dispose of what was legally property of foreigners. Immediate prohibition of all forms of sale and mortgage in land was imperative. But the Cadets would have none of it. When the peasant Congress passed a resolution urging such prohibition, the Cadets denounced it, and when the Social-Revolutionary Chernov succeeded the Cadet Shingarev as Minister of Agriculture after the fall of the first Provisional Government, they used all their influence to prevent him from issuing such a regula-

tion. When he finally defied them and issued a decree prohibiting transaction in purchase of land, they were so inflamed that they charged him with being a traitor, a German agent, and turned upon his person a stream of abuse. Not even after a court of honor had exonerated Chernov of their accusations, did they abandon their assaults upon his character.

Thus the temporary agrarian measures proposed by the Cadets were not only inadequate but subversive of the very ends they were intended to achieve. But it is in their final solution of the agrarian program that we most clearly discern the remarkable divergence between Cadet theory and peasant reality.

The Cadets, like all other political parties excepting the Bolshevists, insisted that the final disposition of the land question should be left to the authority of the Constituent. They were, however, in no hurry to summon the assembly. In their incurable dread of the Revolution they strove desperately to postpone it in the hope that the flush of revolutionary fervor would subside and then they would have a better chance of dominating the assembly. They knew that if the Constituent were summoned soon, the peasant representing the vast majority of the population would swamp it with his delegates and while in the heat of revolutionary passion would

carry through his own program, which was not at all after their heart. Therefore, at the outbreak of the Revolution they advocated the postponement of the Constituent until after the war, which they were determined to fight through to victory. They soon discovered, however, that the people were in no mood to tolerate such a policy and they abandoned it, contenting themselves with a vigorous opposition to the immediate summoning of the national assembly. During March and April, 1917, while they held the reigns of government, they scarcely made a move to prepare the nation for the much longed-for convention. They merely promised to summon it, but appointed neither time nor place and nominated no commission to prepare the machinery for the elections. After the fall of the Milyukov ministry, when the cry calling for the Constituent mounted dangerously higher and higher from day to day, an announcement was finally made that it would be convened on the 30th of September, 1917. That, however, did not suit the taste of the Cadets, though their representatives in the Cabinet had approved of the announcement. They urged a further postponement, claiming that the people could not be properly prepared for elections within the allotted space of time. The Kerensky administration finally yielded to pressure, and the elections were postponed until the 30th of November.

All of this could not but displease the peasant. He was concerned solely with the speedy solution of the land problem, and any measure that was calculated to retard his coming into possession of the land, could not but rouse his suspicion and impatience and goad him into acts of violence. The Cadet tactics, therefore, instead of abating, only heightened the revolutionary passion of the *mouzhik*, which circumstance demonstrates anew how woefully the Cadets misjudged the working of the peasant's mind.

It is, however, in the mode of the Cadets' final solution of the land problem, that we perceive the most marked difference between their program and the peasant's aspirations. The main features of this solution are embodied in their program adopted in April, 1917, in the article entitled the "Agrarian Law." The article opens with a statement to the effect that the party is aware of the gravity of the economic crisis in the village, and favors the enlargement of the peasant landholdings, "to be effected through the confiscation of state, appanage, cabinet and monastery lands and also through the compulsory alienation of privately owned lands to the extent that may be found necessary." Such lands shall be turned into a state land-fund out of which the peasant shall be allotted a new share, through the instrumentality of the Government land commissions. The amount of land each peasant shall receive shall be

equal to his alimentary norm, which is defined as "such an area of land which, under the given circumstances, and taking into consideration the income derived from other sources, wherever such exist, shall be sufficient to cover the average requirements for food, house, clothing and the payment of taxes." The land shall not become the private property of the recipient, but shall be held by him only as long as he shall work it. The manner of holding, whether individual or communal, shall be left to the choice of each locality. The landlords shall be compensated for the land. The amount of compensation shall be based upon the normal, that is, average income derived in the given locality, not from rentals but from personal operation of the estate. This income shall serve as a basis of capitalization. If, for example, the income from a *dessyatin* is ten roubles and the current rate of interest is five per cent, the *dessyatin* is valued at two hundred roubles. Payments shall be made in interest-bearing securities issued by the Government out of the taxes collected from all citizens. These are the main features of the Cadet program. How do they tally with the actual and potential aspirations of the peasant?

To begin with, the Cadets do not propose to alienate all the land of the *pomieshtchiks*, whereas the peasant does, with the possible exception of such areas as the owners may want to till, not with hired,

but with their own hands. Of course, if there were an unlimited amount of arable land in Russia, if there were enough to carve out generous allotments to the peasant without the need of breaking up all the big estates, the Cadets might, through compromise and concession in other respects, succeed in carrying out this particular feature of their program. But the available land in Russia is scarcely sufficient to meet the needs of the many millions of peasants, and it is hard to conceive how any one of them should he be possessed even of a more or less substantial allotment, will acquiesce in his neighboring landlord's holding a big estate. His appetite for land will not be satisfied as long as there shall be such estates and, therefore, an opportunity to add another strip to his farm.

Secondly, the alimentary norm the Cadets propose as a basis for each individual allotment will not satisfy the peasant for any length of time, even should he at first agree to that arrangement, which in the majority of cases he will not. The very notion that he is entitled to no more than the barest necessities of living will in course of time prove repugnant to him. Besides, the Cadets do not propose that the peasant shall himself determine what this alimentary norm shall be. The government shall do that —presumably a government that would favor the Cadet program and would, therefore, be interested in

reducing to a minimum the amount of expropriated land, ultimately therefore the alimentary norm of the peasant, which practically means his standard of living. Further, no such alimentary norm is proposed for the landlords. They shall be at liberty to maintain whatever standard of living they choose. This surely would be clearly a case of class legislation in favor of the landlords, and would offer to the radical elements a mighty weapon with which to rouse the hostility of the *mouzhik*.

Granted, however, that the peasant at first accepts the alimentary norm and the minimum expropriation of estates, he will be content with such a reform only as long as the attainment of the barest necessities of life constitutes his sole immediate goal. Once he has reached this goal, he will strive for other things. Sheer instinct and also that education which even the Cadets promise to him, will lead to an increase of his wants. He will want a daily newspaper, which very few peasants can now afford, magazines, books, better clothes, better furniture, better wagons and buggies; he will want to build larger, more attractive homes; he will want to go to town to the "movies" or to some other entertainment; being exceedingly musical, he will want musical instruments and other things, which may seem luxuries at first, but which with the development of his individuality will become necessities, just as the telephene

and automobile have become with the American farmer. But being chained to a fixed alimentary norm, he will be prevented from raising his standard of living.

Further, to the peasant the Cadets' proposal to compensate the landlords for whatever land should be alienated from them, is even more objectionable than their scheme for the distribution of land. Of course the Cadets do not propose to have the peasant remunerate the landlords. The government shall do that out of the general tax collected from all citizens. Now the vast majority, about 80 per cent of the citizens in Russia, are peasants, consequently by and large most of the compensation for the landlords will come out of the *mouzhik's* coffers. True, the Cadets propose an income and inheritance tax, which should it be heavy enough, might throw the burden of taxation upon the richer classes. But representing the interests of these classes as they do, the Cadets are not likely to favor such a measure, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that the Cadets regard Russian capital as a precious infant needing all the possible care to enable it to grow strong and convert Russia into a powerful industrial nation. It follows, therefore, that the burden of remunerating the landlords will fall upon the *mouzhik*.

Now that would not be so bad if the amount of compensation were moderate. From the peasant's

point of view it is exorbitant. The Cadets propose to insure to the landlords an income equal to the average they derived not from rentals but from "*sobstvennoy otrabotki*," that is, from personal operation of the farm. The distinction between rentals and income from personal operation is more or less illusory. It stands to reason that while in certain localities there may be quite a substantial discrepancy between the two, on the whole the one tends to attain the level of the other, for if a landlord can derive a larger income by renting land, than he can by managing his own tillage of crops, he will, of course, do so, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that the demand for rent-land was much greater than the supply. If, therefore, the Cadets propose to guarantee to the landlords an income that shall be equal to the average they derived from personal management of their estates, they really guarantee to them the income derived from renting their land, and rentals, as has already been pointed out, were exorbitant, and were one of the chief causes of the impoverishment of the *mouzhik*. Now the biggest part of compensation the landlords are to receive, will come from the peasant. This has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph. In other words, the Cadets through their scheme of land-indemnity to be paid to the *pomieshtchiks* would actually compel the peasant to continue to pay big

rentals for whatever additional land he may acquire. The only differences between the system that prevailed under the Czar and the one the Cadets propose to inaugurate, is that the amount of rent under the latter would be somewhat reduced, and that instead of paying directly to the landlords, the peasant would have to pay it to them indirectly in the form of a state tax. Under these circumstances with the best of intentions the Cadets cannot hope materially to improve the condition of the *mouzhik*. He will not have the means to purchase better tools, better seed, fertilizer and the other things necessary to raise the productivity of his soil. Of course the Cadets promise to extend liberal aid to him so as to enable him to improve his technical equipment. But where will they obtain the means for such aid? They will float loans, indorse liabilities. And then what? They will have to pay their debts in the future and only through taxation, the bulk of which will come out of the peasant's pocket.

As a matter of fact the peasant is thoroughly and vigorously opposed to any form of land indemnities. He does not regard the *pomieshtchiks* as owners but as usurpers. He has no respect whatever for their claim to their inviolate rights to the land. In all of the peasant's utterances on the subject, whether in the form of written resolutions or speeches, the point with regard to compensation has been made emphati-

cally clear. The peasant simply refuses to sanction any form of remuneration to the landlords. Perhaps the finest and most conclusive evidence on the matter is embodied in the numerous speeches of the peasant deputies in the second Duma, when the question of compensation was under discussion. These deputies, it must be remembered, acted under detailed instructions from their constituents, so that their utterances reveal not only their personal attitude, but also that of the peasant masses. I shall quote portions of several speeches of peasant deputies relating to the subject of land-indemnities. The simplicity, crudeness and occasional confusion in expression only lend emphasis to the ideas presented.

Peasant deputy Nyetchailo said:

"We are told to buy this land, which belongs to the people. Buy it? Are we newly arrived foreigners from England, France or some other country? Why then should we have to buy our own lands? We have paid for them a ten-fold price with our labor, our sweat, our blood and our money."

Peasant deputy Kirsonov from Saratov, one of the poorest provinces, said:

"We are talking of land these days as of nothing else. We are told it is a sacred inviolate possession. I think if the people want it, there can be no inviolateness about it. Gentlemen of the nobility! You think we have forgotten the time when you used us

as stakes in playing at cards and exchanged us for dogs! We know we were your sacred inviolate property. But the land has been stolen from us. The peasants who have sent me here have said: that the land is ours! We have come here not to buy, but to take it."

Deputy Fomitchev said:

"We, the representatives of the peasants, cannot accede to the demand for compensation, because compensation would only be a noose round our necks."

Peasant deputy Affanasyev, representing one million peasants from the Don region, said:

"Work, sweat and make use of the land. But if you want to live on the land, if you do not want to work it, if you do not want to apply your labor to it, you have no right to draw any benefit from it."

Deputy Semyonov said:

"For two hundred years we have been waiting for the treasure to fall from heaven. But in vain. The land has remained in the hands of the big landlords, who have acquired it through the sacrifices of *our* fathers and grandfathers. But the land is not theirs, it is God's. I understand perfectly well, that the land belongs to the toiling people, to those who sweat over it. Deputy Purishkevitch (a rabid reactionary) says 'Help! Revolution!' What does it mean? Yes, if the land is taken from them, they and not we will

make a revolution. We shall continue to fight for our rights, but we shall be a peaceful people. Have we 150 *dessyatins* each like the priest? And what of the land of the monasteries and churches? What do they need it for? No, gentlemen, it is time to stop hoarding fortunes and hiding them in your pockets. It is time we also actually began to live. The country will understand everything, gentlemen. I understand everything perfectly well. We are honest citizens. We do not occupy ourselves with politics, as one of the preceding orators has said. They (the landlords), fattened on our blood and our lives, loaf around. We shall remember this, but we shall not offend them, we shall even give them land. If we figure 16 *dessyatins* for each household in our section, there will still remain fifty *dessyatins* for every one of them. Thousands, millions of our people are starving, and they are feasting, and when we are in the army and fall ill, we are told 'he has land in his native place.' But where is this place, this native country? We have none, or only such where it is recorded on paper where we were born, and what our religion is. But we have no land. Yes, I want to tell you, that our people have instructed me to have all the church monastery, state appanage, and *pomieshtchiks'* lands transferred to those who will work them. I want to tell you that my people have sent me here to demand land and freedom and

civil liberties, and we shall go on with our work, and shall not point out landlords here and peasants there. We shall all be equal, each a lord in his own place."

Deputy Morozov said:

"We must take the land away from the priests and *pomieshtchiks*. They (the priests) speak of the Holy Gospel and read to us the words 'Ask and it shall be given unto you, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' We have been asking, asking, but they have not given unto us; we have been knocking, knocking and they have not opened unto us. Shall it become necessary for us to break the door and take things by force? Gentlemen, do not allow the doors to be broken. Give voluntarily. Then we shall have freedom and liberty, and you shall live well, and we shall live well."

Deputy Sakhnov from the province of Kiev said:

"At present the peasants are very poor, because they have no land. The peasant suffers at the hands of the *pomieshtchiks*, who oppress him terribly. Why is it the *pomieshtchiks* can have so much land and the peasant only the one kingdom in heaven? Gentlemen, when the peasants sent me here, they instructed me to defend their interests and to demand that all the lands of the church, monasteries, appanages, *pomieshtchiks* shall be taken without compensation. Know, gentlemen representatives of the people, a hungry man cannot sit still, when he ob-

serves that despite his woe, the government is on the side of the landlords. He cannot help wanting land, even if it is against the law; necessity compels him to want it. A hungry man is ready for everything, because need compels him to disregard all considerations, for he is hungry and poor."

One could quote numerous pages of speeches embodying similar thoughts and sentiments. Despite the incoherence, commonplaceness, questionable grammar of these utterances, they voice the conceptions and desires of the peasant more profoundly and more vigorously than the multitude of carefully prepared theses with their cautious phrasing and finely spun logic, that have been written by various students of the peasant problem. From these speeches it is only too obvious how the peasant regards compensation.

But the Cadets aver that confiscation of land without compensation will precipitate an economic crisis. In the words of Izgoyev, one of their most brilliant writers, "the land is burdened with heavy debts; large industrial enterprises are financially connected with it. If it should come about that the debts on the land in Russia are not paid, our entire financial structure will be upset. Our credit will collapse, and since foreigners are greatly interested in our industrial and banking institutions and in our national loans, having invested huge sums of money

in them, we shall run the risk of having foreigners establish control over our finances as has already been done with Greece, Turkey, Persia, China." There is more panic than logic in the warning of Izgoyev. Perhaps he would have been justified in conjuring the specter of a national financial crash and the possibility of foreign control, if the indebtedness on the land of the *pomieshtchiks* that would be subject to alienation were equal to its market value, which it is not. According to Z. S. Kazenelenbaum of Moscow University, a student of pronounced Cadet sympathies, there are in all about fifty million *dessyatins* of arable land in possession of landlords. While the maximum value of this land is between 5.9 and 5 billions of roubles, the indebtedness upon it is but 2.5 billions, that is about one-half of the minimum value. The government could, therefore, confiscate all the lands of the *pomieshtchiks*, make good all the liabilities against it, both foreign and domestic, and thereby avert the possibility of an internal financial collapse and the possibility of foreign intervention, which the Cadets dread, and still save to the taxpayers a debt of 2.5 billion roubles, the annual interest on which alone would amount to 150 million roubles or about half of what that interest was for the entire national debt in 1907. The Cadets know as well as any one that no government—excepting an ultra-revolutionary—would deliberately plunge

the nation into a serious financial crisis, and that those parties who oppose compensation would as a matter of sheer self-protection make some arrangements whereby the heavy mortgages on the *pomieshtchiks'* lands could be lifted. But lifting these mortgages is one thing, supporting handsomely thousands of landlords by allowing them a yearly stipend equal to their average income from their land is quite another.

Thus the Cadet agrarian program does not fit in with the desires and aspirations of the *mouzhik*. Inveterate compromisers that they are, the Cadets attempt to reconcile the peasant and landlord, which simply cannot be done, for the interests of the one are in every respect diametrically opposed to those of the other. No wonder that when the workers and soldiers of Petrograd demanded the resignation of Milyukov, because of his adherence to the foreign policies of the Czarist régime, as expressed in his note to the Allies pledging Russia to abide by all the agreements with them, secret and open, the Cadets found no support whatever in rural Russia, and Milyukov had to resign. No wonder also in the elections to the Constituent held in November, 1917, the Cadets elected no more than 8 deputies out of a total of 800!

No one would, of course, accuse the leaders of the Cadet party of indifference to the lot of the peasant.

On the contrary, men like Milyukov, Hessen, Roditchev, Struve, Petrunkevitch, are big of heart, and are only too eager to help the *mouzhik* rise out of his poverty. Were it merely a question of personal sacrifice these men would gladly offer their all to elevate the peasant to a prosperous condition. But they do not approach the Russian peasant in terms of his own immediate needs and wishes. Steeped in western ideas of government, they measure Russia only with the western political yardstick, which the peasant does not and has not the desire to understand.

The Cadets, however, have as yet been unable to grasp the fundamental error of their agrarian program. Defeat and disaster and isolation have taught them little. They still profess faith in their solution of the agrarian crisis, despite the fact that the peasant has overwhelmingly rejected it in resolution, speech and at the polls. In an article in the "New Europe" of February 13, 1919, Milyukov reiterates that only the Cadet program can satisfactorily settle the land question. He writes as follows:

"Others ask in the same manner whether it would not be well in order to introduce social peace in Russia to start with a radical agrarian program. My answer is always the same. Before political elections can take place or agrarian reforms carried through, we must first emerge from the present state of chaos,

introduce some degree of order and at least safeguard the life and property of the citizens."

It would be really interesting to know how Milyukov proposes to establish the order he advocates as a prerequisite for internal reconstruction. Is it through propaganda and exhortation? He and his colleagues have agitated brilliantly, have exhorted passionately, yet have failed disastrously. Is it through force? There can be no other alternative. Force was what Stolypin resorted to in the Revolution which followed the Russo-Japanese War. Is it possible that Milyukov, who is by temperament averse to violence and bloodshed, would sanction a campaign of pacification à la Stolypin? Has he forgotten his own scorching denunciations of the unspeakable minion of Czardom?

CHAPTER XIII

THE SOCIAL-REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE PEASANT

With the fall of the Milyukov Ministry and the coming of the coalition government the task of solving the land problem fell to the lot of the moderate elements in the Socialist parties, particularly to the Social-Revolutionaries. Victor Chernov, leader of the last-named party, became Minister of Agriculture, and Kerensky, with whose name the new Provisional Government was identified, was also a leader in the Social-Revolutionary party. It must be remembered, of course, that the new administrators of the department of Agriculture, were not always in a position to exercise their own judgments and to enforce their own principles. They were seriously hampered in the Cabinet by the opposition of the more conservative ministers. On the whole, however, the agrarian policies of the new Provisional Government reflected the attitude of the moderate and chiefly moderate Social-Revolutionary parties toward the peasant.

More than any other political party the Social-Revolutionaries have the distinction of being of

native growth. The Cadets, we have already learned, have borrowed exhaustively from current western conceptions and practices of political institutions. The Social-Democrats, whether Menshevist or Bolshevist, proudly profess their inviolate adherence to Marxian socialism. Only the Social-Revolutionaries have evolved a philosophy that is but faintly tinged with foreign thought. They represent a purely Russian type of socialism. The pivotal point of their philosophy rests upon the so-called "peculiarly Russian institution," the peasant commune. Direct descendants of the populists of the sixties and seventies, they see in the peasant commune a ready instrument for the establishment of a socialist state. Russia, they declare, because of the presence of this commune, can escape the agony and travail of capitalistic development, and unlike western Europe, can at once pass into a socialist form of national economy. Their attitude toward the materialistic conception of history and the class struggle, the corner-stones of Marxism, is on the whole negative. Nor do they draw any distinction between the intellectual and manual workers.

The chief interest of the Social-Revolutionaries has always been the peasant. They do not ignore the industrial proletariat. In their official program they have incorporated numerous provisions calculated to improve the welfare of the factory worker,

and, like the Marxians, they champion as their ultimate goal nationalization and socialization of industry. But their main endeavors have always been in the interest of the *mouzhik*, in whose commune they discern a panacea for Russia. In fact the Social-Revolutionaries have come to be associated with the peasant so closely, that they have been regarded as *the* peasant party, and surely the peasant has not been backward in showing his allegiance to them. In all elections since the coming of the first fateful Duma, the peasant has always supported them or their allies, the Laborites.

How then did the Social-Revolutionaries propose to solve the land problem, now that they were at the helm of the Ministry of Agriculture, and that one of their most popular leaders, Kerensky, was the head of the new government?

The Social-Revolutionaries, like the Cadets, proposed to leave the permanent solution of the land problem to the Constituent, and pending the opening of that august body they worked out a series of provisional ameliorating measures.

As regards their permanent solution of the land question, that is, the land law they were prepared to urge upon the Constituent, we find its principles stated in their party platform in the following passage:

"In the question of rebuilding the land régime the Party of the Social-Revolutionaries, in the interest

of socialism and the struggle against the bourgeois-property foundations, strives to lean upon the communal and labor conceptions, traditions and forms of existence of the Russian peasantry, especially on the conviction widely spread among them that the land is nobody's, and that the right to its use is acquired only through labor. In conformity with its general views on the problems of the revolution in the village, the party demands SOCIALIZATION of Land, that is, the removal of land from the processs of exchange and private ownership of individuals and groups and the placing of it under public ownership on the following basis: all lands pass into the administration of central and local bodies of self-government, beginning with the democratically organized casteless village and city communes and ending with the regional and central institutions (administrations of settlements, migrations, and land funds); the use of land is determined by equitable utilization, that is by providing a consuming norm derived from personal, either individual or group labor; a rental levied in the form of a special tax, is devoted to social needs; the use of land not of a specifically local significance—the vast forests and fisheries—is regulated by the central organs of self-government; the sub-surface deposits become the property of the state; the land becomes public property without compensation; those sustaining losses

through this reversal of property rights, are entitled to no more aid than is necessary to maintain existence during the interval of adaptation to the new conditions of life."

The main features, then, of the land-law as proposed by the Social-Revolutionaries, are, the abolition of all forms of private property in land; no compensation to losers of land; allotment of land only to those toiling with their own hands, and not with hired labor; the amount of land apportioned to be determined by the consuming norm of the peasant. The Social-Democrats have always denounced the Social-Revolutionaries as utopians and dreamers. Russia, they insist, must pass through a capitalistic development, must attain that concentration of wealth, which Marx declared was necessary for any country to reach before it could develop the productive instrumentality indispensable to a socialist state, and before it could possibly develop a class-conscious proletariat ready and fit to assume control of industries. The attempt to eliminate the class struggle from the village and to lump all peasants, rich and poor, together as though all were actuated by the same motives, the Social-Democrats have likewise bitterly assailed. The entire theory of the Social-Revolutionaries with the commune as its fundamental base, the Russian Marxians have volubly attacked and ridiculed.

Nevertheless the peasant found in the Social-Revolutionary pronouncements an expression of his own innate desires. "Land and Freedom," "All Land to the People," these popular slogans of the Social-Revolutionaries caught his imagination. The peasant masses, it must be noted, do not really understand the significance of the socialization scheme, which the Social-Revolutionary party advocates. That it implies the abolition of his own right to private property in land, even to the small strip he acquired under the old régime, he does not imagine, and would not at all be disposed to accept. He is attracted chiefly by the promise of the Social-Revolutionaries to confiscate the big estates and to distribute them among those who claim their right to them, that is, to those who till them.

Meantime a series of temporary measures were put through by the new Ministry of Agriculture. An elaborate system of land committees was instituted upon whom devolved the task of carrying out the immediate ameliorating measures. There were township, county, province committees and also one national or central. The functions of these committees, especially those of a local character, was to enforce whatever decrees the Central Land Committee or the Privisional Government might issue, and to assist in any way they could in the maintenance of order in the villages and thus

help bring the nation peacefully to the Constituent. All differences that might arise between peasant and landlord or peasant and peasant with respect to the price of rentals, the wages of farm labor, the disposition of available public and private lands, that had not been cultivated by the peasant, they were to settle. They were also to help secure seed, implements, animal or machine power for the use of the peasant. In case the local committees could not settle a point of difference, the matter was presented to the next higher, that is county committee, and from there it might be carried higher until it reached the Central Land Committee, which was the final arbiter.

The make-up of these committees was of a representative character. In the towns they were elected, five in each, by all men and women residents, twenty years old and over. In the county they were made up of one representative from each *volost* (town) committee, and four from the county *zemsky* assembly; in the province one from each county, one from the capital, four from the provincial *zemsky* assembly, and the Central Land Committee was made up of twenty-five members appointed by the government, all experts in agrarian and agricultural matters, one from each political party, three from the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets, six from the Peasant Central Soviet and one from each of the province committees

as well as three from the Provisional Committee of the now defunct Duma. The process of setting up these committees was by no means easy owing to the size of the country, poor means of transportation and the general break-down of the economic and political organizations caused by the war and the revolution.

To facilitate the work of these committees the Minister of Agriculture issued the decree forbidding all further private transactions in land. Such a decree was absolutely necessary to enable the land committees to dispose of non-peasant lands during the interval pending the opening of the Constituent in a manner more or less satisfactory to the peasant.

However, the success of the Provisional Government and the Social-Revolutionaries in holding the allegiance of the *mouzhik* depended not upon their temporary measures of relief, but upon the ultimate solution of the land problem in accord with the wishes of the peasant. Rightly or wrongly the peasant was eager to come into control of the land at once. He was fearful lest he should again be cheated out of what he regarded was his due. In other words, to sustain the faith of the peasant the Provisional Government and the Social-Revolutionaries should either have hastened the summoning of the Constituent, or else should have issued a decree at once confiscating all the land. Says

Bublikov, a man of keen business insight, whom no Russian will accuse of being contaminated with radical doctrines:

"The Provisional Government should have proclaimed the land the property of the state, the government meanwhile assuming temporary possession of it and leaving its final disposition to the Constituent." Action, quick and decisive, was in the opinion of Bublikov indispensable in order to sustain the faith of the peasant in the existing régime, for in a revolution with institutions and laws in a fluid state and practically no forms of outward restraint in existence, emotions, ideas, and allegiances shift up and down with tremendous rapidity.

But Kerensky and Chernov and all their advisers and counsellors did not dare to act in accord with the manifest will of the peasant. Not because they had lost their sympathy for the *mouzhik*. Leaders of the peasant party, they, more fully than others, appreciated his desperate condition. Nor were they in any way actuated by motives of personal gain. Their fiercest enemies have not accused them of that. To understand the reason for their failure to act decisively we must first inform ourselves of the general political condition of the time, and the policies the government in power had sought to pursue.

The tragedy of Kerensky's government was that it

was caught in the toils of a horrible fatality. It was a coalition government, that did not coalesce. The conflicting interests represented in the government could under no circumstances be made to unite. As far as Kerensky was concerned he strove honestly and strenuously to reconcile the forces of the war and the Revolution, and no right-minded person will denounce him for his failure to effect such a reconciliation. It was simply beyond the powers of any individual or set of individuals to harmonize two gigantic forces arrayed against each other. War demands unity, sacrifice, forgetfulness of self, constant effort, whereas revolution disrupts order, shatters unity, invites social clashes, hampers concerted effort. War demands a complete cessation of inner struggles, and the concentration of a nation's wealth and strength upon the fight against the external foe, whereas a revolution implies the outburst of inner struggles. A review of Kerensky's position and policies fully substantiates the above assertions. Kerensky in his desire to prosecute the war, or at least to remain a partner of the Allies, wished to maintain military discipline in the ranks, but interested in preserving "the fruits of the Revolution," and in fear of counter-revolutionary plots in the army among old-régime officers, he issued the decree of the democratization of the army, placing a check upon the powers and activities of the officers,

and thereby wrecking what little discipline had remained in the army after the overthrow of the Czar. He wanted to have a revolutionary army that would fight with vigor and zest for a revolutionary cause, and yet he failed even to induce the Allies to revise or discard the secret treaties into which they had entered with the Czar, and thus had not only robbed himself of the biggest moral argument to promote the revolutionary war-spirit in the army, but had yielded to his enemies the most powerful weapon they could wield to annihilate the war-spirit of the soldier by enabling them to tell the latter that the continuation of the war was not for a revolutionary but for a purely imperialistic cause. No happier was the Kerensky administration with the task of maintaining harmony between capital and labor. The war, of course, demanded such unity between these two classes so as to keep up the already greatly depleted productivity of the country. But the Revolution inspired the workers to demand new concessions and conditions to which Russian capital had not been accustomed, and which it in many instances had declared that it would not and could not grant. All of Kerensky's efforts to bring peace between capital and labor failed most tragically, for neither class was willing to renounce its hostility to the other. In consequence of all this the production of coal, iron, steel, ammunition, arms,

implements, railroad supplies, kerosene and other things all classes, especially the soldier, needed desperately, slumped heavily, and with a lack of commodities, unrest could not be expected to subside, and yet the greater the unrest the greater was the diminution of supplies, and hence the greater the sources of social irritation. It was a vicious circle of cause and effect, resulting in galloping economic deterioration. Under these circumstances had Kerensky and Chernov attempted to confiscate the land, they would only have tended further to disrupt the war-mechanism, which they wished to strengthen, for no sooner would such a decree have been issued, than the influential business elements in the country, nearly all heavy investors in land, and always the first to suffer losses at any encroachment of the government upon the sacredness of private property, would have turned against the government, and without their support there was not even a remote possibility of continuing the war at that time.

And yet Kerensky would not step out of the war. It was a tragic situation, but there was no way out of it for Kerensky and the moderate Social-Revolutionaries. About all they could do was to deluge the people with fervid oratory. Kerensky appealed eloquently to the patriotism, the conscience, the civic pride and the personal self-esteem of the

people, especially the soldiers, peasants and proletarians. Now in the early days of the Revolution, as long as it was still a question of exterminating the old régime, and while the people were still aglow with the thrill of the miraculous victory over Czarism, the eloquent utterances of Kerensky swayed them into his support. But when the flush of exultation had ebbed; when the hour had arrived for the settlement of the pressing problems of the moment; when sudden cleavages and violent clashes between the various hostile social groups had broken loose, the power of words, the inspiration of the eloquent phrase had lost its magic hold of the masses. Acts, only acts, could have sustained faith and enthusiasm for Kerensky's régime. And yet Kerensky dared not act decisively for the war and simultaneously for the Revolution, for any act favoring the one tended to undermine the other and vice versa. All of the makeshift instruments of support that Kerensky and his advisers had summoned into existence—the Moscow Conference, the Democratic Conference, the Preliminary Parliament—were a brilliant illustration of the helpless impossible position of the Coalition Government considering the circumstances under which it came into existence, and the aims it sought to promulgate. In all of these assemblies judging by the speeches delivered and the resolutions proposed and disposed of there,

practically all that the delegates did was to denounce and berate each other, and about all Kerensky could do was to mount the platform at frequent intervals and urge the various factions with all his innate sincerity and often with tears in his eyes, to forget their differences, to be good, and to trust each other.

Such a condition was bound to react disastrously upon the morale of the peasant. From day to day his discontent mounted and his defiance of existing authority grew bolder, all the more so because of the scarcity of necessary commodities. In many provinces acts of violence increased constantly. In the Rostov province, for example, the peasants armed with clubs, ousted the government agents who had come to ask for the delivery of grain. In Kiev peasants buried their grain underground. They would not sell it, when they could get nothing but paper money for it. In Orenburg the slogan spread in the villages "sow less, it will be taken from you anyway." In Samara peasants decided not to send a pound of bread to the "city idlers." Land committees, swept along by the rising discontent, usurped their authority—confiscated land at will and even implements, stock, grain and fodder. Said Peshekhonov, Minister of Supplies, in Kerensky's cabinet, in an appeal to the peasants in the fall of 1917:

"In many places the peasants have committed

unlawful acts, which are quite detrimental to this year's crop. The peasants do not allow the use of agricultural machines in the harvesting of crops and in the plowing of fields; they remove from the landed estates war-prisoners and city laborers; they compel proprietors to pay war-prisoners higher wages than the government had arranged; they raise the prices of their labor contrary to contracts; they seize by force crops, tools, machinery; they do not allow the harvesting of grains, the plowing and preparation of fields for new planting."

It would only clutter the pages of this book to quote further similar complaints from Chernov, Kerensky, the Soldiers' and Workers' as well as the Peasant's Central Soviets. Of course it is easy to condemn the peasant for his failure to respond to the appeals of various leaders and parties, for his lack of patriotism, for his implacable selfishness, for his disregard of existing legal authority. We should remember, however, that in his past, in his opportunities for self-development, in his education or rather lack of it, in his social privileges or lack of them, in his contact with the government and its various agents and agencies, there was nothing that could inculcate in him a civic pride, a national consciousness, a patriotic fervor and a respect for governmental authority. We must always seek to understand the peasant in terms of his and not our environment.

In the end the situation grew so desperate, that Kerensky and Avxentjev ordered the suppression and arrest of the disobedient land committees, and this only tended further to intensify the hostility of the peasant. Events were moving to a climax. In Tambov the peasants had practically effected a complete land-revolution in defiance of the government. To stave off further chaos and anarchy in the village, the Kerensky administration hurriedly prepared a decree for the immediate expropriation of the big estates. This decree more than any other fact demonstrates the intensity of the agrarian crisis during the last days of the Provisional government. But it was too late to act. The forces of the opposition had gathered too much momentum.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BOLSHEVIKI AND THE PEASANT

JUST as the Social-Revolutionaries began their career with a program almost entirely devoted to the needs and interests of the peasant, paying but slight heed to those of the city proletariat, so the Social-Democrats or Marxians of Russia entered upon their political career with a program dedicated almost exclusively to the problems of the industrial laborer, practically ignoring those of the peasant. Looking upon life from the vantage point of orthodox Marxism, they were wedded to the theory that the Russian peasant was fated to go through the process of proletarization. Land, like industry, they preached, was destined to concentrate into ever fewer hands, the number of landless peasants to increase, grow class-conscious and wage an ever-growing war against the landowners, until socialization of land, like socialization of industry, became a fact. It must be understood that the Social-Democrats did not completely disregard the immediate needs of the peasant. On the contrary, in their general struggle for political, social and cultural betterment they were concerned about the *mouzhik* as much as about the

proletariat. Only to them the peasant problem was not distinct from the labor problem, and the solution of the former they understood strictly in terms of the latter. To the most insistent cry of the peasant for land, they offered no reply. This very cry seemed to them to be an indication that the peasant was a potential bourgeois, who upon the acquisition of a homestead and implements, would become a defender of the institution of private property, and would align himself with other classes of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against the proletariat, both rural and urban. Such, indeed, was the attitude of all European Marxists toward the peasantry of Europe. And when the German Socialist Congress in Breslau passed a resolution by a big majority, barring the peasantry from a distinct place in their program, the Russian Social-Democrats hailed the decision with exultation, and felt greatly relieved at not having taken the peasant, like the city laborer, under their wings.

Life, however, proved stronger than the resolution of the Russian Marxists. The growing restlessness of the peasant, constant outbreaks of rebellion in the village, and a closer study and understanding of the conditions and the psychology of the peasantry, convinced them that the economic problems of the village demanded specific and immediate attention. Nickolai Lenine was among the first Russian Marx-

ists to comprehend the situation, and it was he who prepared the first agrarian program of the Russian Social-Democrats, which was adopted at the London conference in 1903. It was a very mild program. Its outstanding feature was the advocacy of the return to the peasant of the strips of land that had been cut off from his holdings after the emancipation (*otrezki*). It also favored the cancellation of further indemnity fees, the abrogation of the existing indirect tax, which pressed heavily upon the peasant, and the adoption of a direct tax. Lenine's aim, according to his own words, in urging such an agrarian program, was to open wide the road of capitalistic development in Russian peasant agriculture, and to remove the existing obstacles to the free growth of the class struggle in the village. In other words, the aim of the Russian Marxists had not changed. They were as firm as ever in their theory of Russia's transformation into a socialist state through the class struggle. They only changed their tactics in dealing with the peasant, so as to accelerate the consummation of this aim.

Then came the Revolution of 1905. As already mentioned in a previous chapter the part the peasant played in the Revolution was a revelation to all the rest of Russia. The extent and intensity of the agrarian disorders, convinced the Social-Democrats that Lenine's program of "*otrezki*" (literally cut-

tings), that is, the return of these to the *mouzhik*, would by no means satisfy him. Peasant resolutions and utterances at hundreds of gatherings breathed determination to seize all the big estates. More than ever the Marxists realized what a tremendous revolutionary force the peasantry were, and that no revolution ever would be successful without their support. Furthermore, they perceived that, after all, the chasm that existed between the economic interests of the peasant and those of the proletariat could by proper tactics be filled, the revolutionary energies of both classes combined and steered along a common channel. Therefore, like nearly all the political parties eager to win the support of the peasant, the Social-Democrats at their third congress in 1905, adopted quite a radical agrarian program the keynote of which was expressed in the "tactical" resolution in which they pledged themselves to instruct "all party organizations to spread the idea among the masses, that the Social-Democracy sets for itself the task of offering the most energetic support to all revolutionary enterprises of the peasantry, conducive to the improvement of their condition, even to the point of confiscating the private, state, church, monastery and appanage lands."

Three specific agrarian plans were presented for consideration at that congress, the Menshevist, the

Bolshevist and the Partitionist. Since the last one played but an insignificant part in the debates and the subsequent agrarian activities of the Social-Democrats, it may be entirely ignored as far as the purpose of the present discussion is concerned. As regards the two others it must be emphasized that both aimed at the same result—the furtherance of the capitalistic development of Russian agriculture and the promotion of the proletarization of the village. The differences clung round the methods of hastening that process—differences so fundamental as far as the general tactics of the Mensheviki and Bolsheviki were concerned, that they persistently clove the two factions apart, until they finally split them into two hostile parties.

The Mensheviki under the leadership of Maslov, an expert in agrarian affairs, proposed municipalization of land, that is its transfer, with the exception of certain local holdings, into the control of "the large bodies of *local* administration, which have been democratically elected." The peasant was to receive his land through these self-governing bodies and pay his rental to them. The Bolsheviki, on the other hand, with Lenine as their spokesman, proposed nationalization of land, that is, the abolition of all forms of private property in land and its transfer to the control of the state, as represented by centrally constituted bodies, the peasant receiving his land

from, and paying his rental to the state. Both Maslov and Lenine proposed to have all the land turned over to the use of the peasant, only Maslov favored his municipalization scheme, chiefly because he believed that the placing of the control over the land in local, democratically elected bodies, would be the most powerful protection against the return of a reactionary régime. On the other hand, Lenine urged nationalization, chiefly because he believed that that would more fully aid in the promotion of the class struggle in the village. To Maslov's argument that nationalization of land might pave the way to the restoration of the old régime, Lenine replied that the success of any radical land reform depended upon the thorough democratization of the national government. If such democratization did not take place, the big estates would continue to remain in the possession of the landlords and restoration was possible anyway; and if there was such democratization, the landlords would be expropriated, and there would be no danger of restoration.

In this controversy Lenine leaned more toward revolutionary and Maslov toward peaceful tactics. The Mensheviki wanted the land confiscated without compensation, in a legal manner by a duly convened state authority, through orderly political action, while Lenine advocated immediate seizure of estates by the peasants themselves. His program

provided for "the establishment of peasant committees for the immediate annihiliation of all traces of the power and privileges of landlords and for the actual administration of seized lands prior to the inauguration of the new land régime by the National Constituent Assembly."

When the March revolution came, scarcely any of the Socialist leaders had regarded that event as anything more than a political or bourgeois revolution, ushering in political democracy and the opportunity to pursue economic development along the well-trodden path followed by other democratic nations. Then Lenine arrived in Russia from Switzerland. He had all the time favored revolutionary action and championed the idea of a permanent revolution. It was now his turn to shock his friends, both Bolsheviki and Mensheviki, when on the fifteenth of April, 1917, in a speech at a unification meeting of the two factions, he openly stated that the time had come to "discard the soiled linen of European democracy" and to press the Revolution as far to the left as it would go, for the proletariat of the rest of the world would respond and would follow Russia in the struggle for the final great Social Revolution. At the close of that speech, it is not uninteresting to point out, Goldenburg and Steklov, both Bolshevik leaders, vigorously criticised Lenine for his attitude toward the Revolution. They

called him a dreamer, who during his sojourn in a foreign land had alienated himself from Russian realities. Only Madame Kollontay, Minister of Social Welfare under the Bolsheviki, fully shared his views. He, however, remained firm in his advocacy of the Social Revolution, and the subsequent events and conditions in Russia—the decay of the morale of the army, the breakdown of the national economic structure and the general violent unrest in the country, offered a fertile soil for the growth of his conception of the Revolution.

Not that the Russian masses, especially the peasantry, shared Lenine's theory of the Social Revolution. The peasant, it must be stated, does not even comprehend the significance of the phrase Social Revolution. The peasant is not a theorist. Ignorant of history and politics, a hard-headed realist, he gauges the world in terms of his immediate material interests. Lenine's plans for the ultimate reconstruction of Russia and the world by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat, did not in the least interest him. Nowhere in peasant revolutions or peasant journals of that time can one discover a keen curiosity in these plans. As a matter of fact in the early days of the Revolution the term Bolshevik was quite new to the peasant. During the Revolution of 1905, the Bolsheviki had mustered but an insignificant following in the villages—it was the Social-

Revolutionaries who had an overwhelming influence over the peasantry—and after the Revolution the Bolshevik party had become practically extinct, surviving only in the minds of its leaders, who were mostly in Siberia—in jails and in foreign exile.

But Lenine's theories, Bolsheviki programs with regard to the immediate tasks of the Revolution, coincided with and were expressive of, the immediate yearnings of the masses, yearnings, which soon after the overthrow of the Czar found vent in actions of evergrowing magnitude. A mere glance at the internal situation will suffice to corroborate this statement. The soldier, maltreated, betrayed, defeated in the war, compelled to endure untold hardships, often fighting, according to the testimony of General Yanushkevitch, with clubs, stones or with his boots, had lost interest in the war and yearned for its end, and the Bolsheviki promised him peace. The workers, kept under the Czar without even elementary civil, political, and economic rights; barred from the opportunity to improve their economic condition through collective effort, denied the right of organization, strikes, collective bargaining, entirely at the mercy of the employers, who were protected by the Czar's armies, compelled to toil long hours under unsanitary conditions for a pitiful wage, with some legal but no real protection—excepting the charitable disposition of the employer—

against disease, accident, old age and unemployment, now cried out for a thorough change in their condition. And the Bolsheviki urged them to demand complete control of industry, and counselled them to secure this control by means of revolutionary action. And as for the peasant, whose undying dream was more land, the Bolsheviki encouraged him to help himself. Said Lenine in his catechism written in April, 1917, in reply to the question as to whether the peasants "shall at once take possession of the land," "Yes. The land must be seized at once. Strict order should be maintained through the agency of the Council of Peasant Deputies. The production of bread and meat should be increased, for the soldier must be fed. The damaging of cattle, implements, etc., cannot be allowed." And in a letter addressed to the peasant congress on the 3d of June, 1917, he repeated his message to the *mouzhik* in the following words: "There is a debate on as to whether or not the peasantry shall at once take possession of the land in their localities without paying the *pomieshtchiks* rent and without waiting for the the Constituent Assembly. Our party believes that waiting for the action of the Constituent is inadmissible." Now we may believe that the tactics of the Bolsheviki in encouraging the peasant, soldier and worker to proceed to act in accordance with their own immediate desires, was ruinous to Russia and detri-

mental to the rest of the world. This is a matter of personal opinion. One's individual opinion, however, should not obscure from him the fact, that the Bolshevist program, and the desire and practice of the soldier, peasant and worker were in harmony.

Still it is doubtful if the Bolsheviki would have swept into power at the time and in the manner they had, if a series of external circumstances had not favored their fortunes. The enormous strain of the war, the intense suffering of the poorer classes, especially in the cities; the demoralization of the army, which not even machine guns could stop; the failure of the Allies to help Kerensky morally, by declaring null and void the imperialistic treaties they had made with the Czar, and economically, by pouring into Russia cargoes of necessary supplies; the rise of General Kornilov against the Provisional Government and the fear of a counter-revolution in favor of the old régime, which the event had created, and finally and especially the failure of the Provisional Government to hasten the summoning of the Constituent—all these paved the way to power for the Bolsheviki. Kerensky really was not overthrown. Like the Czar, he fell from the sheer weight of his tragic impotence.

Of course there was vigorous opposition to the activities of the Bolsheviki in putting themselves in power. The right Social-Revolutionaries, the Men-

sheviki, the Cadets, and the Central Peasant Soviet, which, it must be remembered, was made up especially of the peasant intelligentzia and was under the leadership of the right wing of the Social-Revolutionaries, all these passionately condemned the Bolsheviki for placing themselves in power. Yet as far as the vast masses were concerned, if there was any opposition among them, it was decidedly passive, for all the afore-mentioned parties could not muster sufficient physical force to make even a conspicuous resistance to the Bolsheviki. The Bolsheviki alone possessed an ample amount of physical force not only to make their position secure, but to render ineffective the efforts of the opposition. Neither the Cadets nor any of the Coalition governments had ever been in a similar position. Now we may think the Russian masses stupid for their indifference or acquiescence in the advent of the Bolshevist government. We may deem them childishly credulous for having been swayed by the words "Land, Bread, Peace," which was the slogan of the Bolsheviki. The fact, however, remains that any summons to revolt against the new government found practically no response in the barracks, work-shop or village. No less vehement an opponent of the Bolsheviki than Harold Williams says: "The Bolsheviki have conquered almost the whole of Russian territory. They are victorious in the civil war less by force of arms

than by virtue of the strange infection of their agitation among the masses. It seems inevitable that the whole of Russia must turn Bolshevik, before she can begin to return to a normal condition."

Once in power the Bolsheviki realized the importance of prompt action. They immediately began negotiations for peace so as to make good their promise to the soldier, and nationalization of factories so as to make good their promise to the proletariat, and at two in the morning on the eighth of November, 1917, the second day they were in power, they issued a new land decree, to make good their promise to the peasant. This decree was not a creation of their own. They had prepared no land decree prior to the fall of Kerensky. The land decree they issued was a resolution of the right Social-Revolutionaries adopted by the Peasant Congress. It reads as follows:

Decree on the Land

Of the Congress of Workmens' and Soldiers' Delegates passed at the meeting of October 26, 2 a. m. (Russian style).

1. All private ownership of land is abolished immediately without any indemnification.

2. All landowners' estates, likewise all the land of the Crown, monasteries, church lands, with all their live stock and inventoried property, homestead

constructions and all appurtenances, pass over into the disposition of the Volost Land Committees and District Soviets of Peasants' Delegates until the Constituent Assembly meets.

3. Any damage whatever done to confiscated property belonging from now on to the whole people, is regarded as a grievous crime, punishable by the Revolutionary Court of Justice. The District Soviets of Peasant Delegates shall take all necessary measures for the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landowners' estates, for the determination of the dimensions of the plots of land and which of them are subject to confiscation, for the drawing up of an inventory of the whole confiscated property, and for the strictest Revolutionary Guard of all the farming property on the land with all the constructions, implements, cattle, supplies of products, etc., passing over to the people.

4. For guidance during the realization of the great land reforms until their final resolution by the Constituent Assembly shall serve the following peasant Nakaz (Instruction) drawn up on the basis of 242 local peasant *nakazes* by the editor's office of the Izvestia of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasant Delegates and published in No. 88 of said Izvestia. (Petrograd No. 88, August 19, 1917.)

The question *re* the land may be decided only by the general Constituent Assembly.

The most equitable solution of the land question should be as follows:

"1. The right of private ownership of the land is abolished forever; the land cannot be sold, nor leased, nor mortgaged, nor alienated in any way. All the lands of the State, the Crown, the Cabinet, the monasteries, Churches, possession lands, entailed estates, private lands, public and peasant lands, etc., shall be alienated without any indemnification; they become the property of the people and the usufructory property of all those who cultivate them (who work them).

"For those who will suffer from this revolution of property the right is recognized to receive public assistance only during the time necessary for them to adapt themselves to the new conditions of existence.

"2. All the underground depths—the ore, naphtha, coal, salt, etc., and also the forests and waters, having a general importance, shall pass over into the exclusive use of the States. All the minor rivers, lakes, forests, etc., shall be usufruct of communities, provided they be under the management of the local organizations of self-government.

"3. The plots of land with highest culture—gardens, plantations, nursery gardens, seed-plots, greenhouses, etc.—shall not be divided, but they shall be transformed into model farms and handed

over as the exclusive usufruct of the State or communities, in dependence on the dimensions or importance.

"4. Homestead lands, town and country lands with private gardens and kitchen gardens, remain as usufruct of their present owners. The dimensions of such lands and the rate of taxes to be paid for their use, shall be established by the laws.

"5. Studs, governmental and private cattle-breeding and bird-breeding enterprises, etc., become the property of the people and pass over either for the exclusive use of the state, or a community, depending on their dimensions and their importance.

"All questions of redeeming same shall be submitted to the examination of the Constituent Assembly.

"6. The right to use the land shall belong to all the citizens (without distinction of sex) of the Russian State, who wish to work the land themselves, with the help of their families, or in partnership, and only so long as they are capable of working it themselves. No hired labor is allowed.

"In the event of a temporary incapacity of a member of a village community during the course of two years, the community shall be bound to render him assistance during this period of time by cultivating his land.

"Agriculturists who in consequence of old age or

sickness shall have lost the possibility of cultivating their land shall lose the right to use it, and they shall receive instead a pension from the State.

"7. The use of land shall be distributive, i. e., the land shall be distributed among the laborers in dependence on the local conditions at the labor or consumptive rate.

"The way in which the land is to be used may be freely selected: as homestead or farm, or by communities, or associations, as will be decided in the separate villages and settlements.

"8. All the land, upon its alienation, is entered in the general popular land fund. The local and central self-governing bodies, beginning with the democratically organized village and town communities and ending with the Central Province institutions, shall see to the distribution of the land among the persons desirous of working it.

"The land fund is subject to periodical redistributions depending on the increase of the population and the development of the productivity and cultivation.

"Through all changes of the limits of the allotments the original kernel of the allotment must remain intact.

"The land of any members leaving the community returns to the land fund, and the preferential right to receive the allotments of retiring members belongs

to their nearest relations or the persons indicated by them.

"The value of the manuring and improvements invested in the land, in so far as the same will not have been used up when the allotment will be returned to the land fund, must be reimbursed.

"If in some place the land fund will prove to be insufficient for the satisfaction of the local population, the surplus of the population must emigrate.

"The organization of the emigration, also the costs thereof and of providing the emigrants with the necessary stock, shall be borne by the State.

"The emigration is carried out in the following order: first the peasants without land who express their wish to emigrate; then the depraved members of the communities, deserters, etc.; and lastly by drawing lots on agreement.

"All of what is contained in this Nakaz, being the expression of the will of the greatest majority of conscious peasants of the whole of Russia, is pronounced to be a temporary law which pending the opening of the Constituent Assembly, shall be put into execution as far as possible immediately and in some parts of it gradually, as will be determined by the District Soviets of the Peasant Delegates.

"The land of the peasants and cossacks serving in the ranks shall not be confiscated."

This decree has little in common with the nation-

alization scheme which Lenine had been advocating since 1906. It is in fact a program which the Social-Democrats had for years been denouncing as stupid and utopian. The opponents of the Bolsheviki, therefore, did not tarry in pointing out to Lenine and his followers their flagrant inconsistency in enacting as the land law a program they had always ridiculed. Certain of the leaders of the opposition in exasperation at the act of the Bolsheviki, called it nothing less than sheer theft. In defense, the Bolsheviki urged the explanation that the Social-Revolutionary agrarian program fitted the changed condition that had been effected by the Revolution, and if the Social-Revolutionaries wished to call their procedure an act of dishonesty, it made no difference to them. They pointed out that they had been opposed to socialization of land in a bourgeois state, for in such a state with industry and capital in the control of private individuals, socialization of land was impracticable. But with the overthrow of the bourgeois state, and with the establishment of a socialist form of national economy, such as they aim at, socialization of land, they argued, is not only logical but indispensable.

However, the subsequent land decrees the Bolsheviki issued, the one in September, 1918, and the other, the final one, in February, 1919, fully explaining their aims and methods and outlining detailed

provisions for the distribution and cultivation of the land, as well as their efforts to carry out these provisions, indicate quite a radical departure from the principles of land-socialization as understood by the Social-Revolutionaries. In adopting the resolution of the latter as their initial decree, the Bolsheviki evidently aimed merely to assure the peasant that the land was his and also to remove from the hands of their most dangerous opponents the most formidable weapon they had—the agrarian program that had been acclaimed by the peasantry, which was in fact a synthesis of numerous peasant resolutions. The real aim of the Bolsheviki land-system is stated in the preamble of the decree of February, 1919, and in a speech Lenine delivered at a convention of delegates of agricultural communes in December, 1918. The preamble reads:

"For the purpose of completing the abolition of exploitation of man by man; the organization of rural economy on socialistic principle through the adoption of all conquests of scientific and technical knowledge; the training of the toiling masses in the spirit of socialism; and also for the purpose of uniting the proletariat with the poor rural classes in their struggle with capitalism,—it is necessary to change the individualistic form of land-operation from the individualistic to the communistic. Large Soviet homesteads, communes, coöperative forms of culti-

vation and other modes of communistic utilization of the land, are the best methods of attaining this goal. Therefore, all forms of individualistic use of land must be looked upon as old and transitory."

In the afore-mentioned speech Lenine said:

"The policy of the Soviets in agriculture is the introduction of communism all over the country. In this direction they are working systematically. For this purpose the Soviets are organizing land communes under their own management. To this end are made provisions that the priority of use of land belongs to the state, then to the public organizations, next to agricultural communes. These provisions are necessary for the transition to complete communism."

This being the aim of the Bolsheviki the question arises how successful have they been in realizing it? The Bolsheviki, of course, will urge that the inauguration of any new land régime in such a vast country as Russia, with nearly eighty per cent of the people actually deriving their living wholly or in part from the cultivation of the soil, with a backward agricultural technique and a backward industrial system, with an ancient and very largely shattered transportation system, and in the absence of a sufficient number of agricultural experts and engineers indispensable to an equitable distribution of land in any form, is a process that requires years for its consum-

mation. So that it would hardly be fair, they would say, to judge the application and the working of the new land law at this time, especially in view of the fact that owing to efforts on the part of native factions and foreign governments to overthrow the existing government by force of arms, the Soviets have been obliged to divert a major portion of their talent and resources to combating the opposition, and have thereby been prevented from centering their energies on the solution of their internal problems. All of which is true, and in an impartial appraisal of the Bolsheviki land-system, allowance must be made for these conditions. Still, from all that the Bolsheviki have already done in the effort to establish a new agricultural régime in Russia during their two years of rule, it is possible to judge as to how the peasant reacts toward the principle of communism they wish him to adopt. This after all is the crux of the matter. Theory or no theory, logic or no logic, the essential factor to be considered is how these fit into the realities of life.

Now, as already pointed out in a preceding chapter, communal form of land-ownership has prevailed among a vast majority of the Russian peasantry for centuries. But the communism to which the peasant has been accustomed—that is the equitable periodic redistribution of the land—is an entirely different affair from the communism the Bolsheviki aspire to

translate into a reality. Under the old system the peasant could do what he pleased with his stock, implements and crops. The land belonged to the commune, but the *mouzhik* worked it as his private property and gathered and disposed of his crops as he chose. Under the proposed Bolshevist land-régime all work the land in common; from the head agronome to the commonest laborer, all are members of the self-governing coöperative commune; there is no employer and no employee; class distinctions derived from the possession of property do not exist; the crops are divided among all members of the commune.

This is something entirely new to the peasant. It is in flat contradiction to the system of land-ownership to which he has been accustomed. It demands complete divorce from the institution of private property in every form. Now whenever we propose a new principle or new method of political, social or economic readjustment, those to be affected by it, before consenting to its application, quite naturally want proof, concrete and indisputable, that the new way will prove more desirable and profitable to them than did the old one. The Bolsheviki, of course, could offer no such proof, for their scheme of communizing the land had never been tried on a large scale. All they could do was to offer theoretical explanations, arguments, to seek to persuade the peasant with words into an adoption of their

program, and the peasant is too practical a person to trust in words only, especially when he is urged to make as complete a departure from established usage as communization of land would involve. Not even the promise of the Bolsheviki to extend generous help to the communes, could tempt the peasant into an acquiescence in their proposed land-system. The peasant insists upon conducting his own agricultural economy independently. The plot of land he cultivates he regards as his individual possession, regardless of what the Bolshevist law may proclaim it to be. Such has been the hostility of the peasant to communization of land that the Bolsheviki have been obliged to abandon the plan of coercing the peasant into its adoption. In a letter to the *sredniaki*, that is, the peasants having a household and small farm of their own, the rural element that has been most hostile to communism, Trotzky wrote:

"The Soviet power does not either force or intend to force the peasant-*sredniaki* to accept the communistic system of land economy."

True, the Bolsheviki have organized many communes. Between April 1st and November 1st, 1919, they made an especially vigorous effort to communize land and brought the total number of established communes to two thousand, with a population of 170,000 and an area of 675,000 acres. But it is

significant to note that only landless and poor peasants have agreed to join the communes. The peasant with an independent holding is unqualifiedly opposed to the experiment. So that at present the agricultural system in vogue in Russia is that of small landholders—which is entirely out of harmony with the fundamental aim of the Bolsheviki to abolish practically all forms of private property and to kill even the desire for its existence.

The division of the land, or that part which has not been taken over by the Soviets for communal and other experimental purposes, naturally proved to be a tremendously difficult task. In some portions of Russia, chiefly in the south and far north, it has not yet even been fully effected. The chief difficulty lay in the fact that in many villages the richer peasants gained control of the Land Committees and subordinated their efforts to personal aggrandizement. Says V. Karpinsky in his review of the working of the Bolsheviki land-law: "During the time of the expropriation of the land-owners the poor peasantry is invariably remaining in the background. The lion's share usually falls into the hands of the powerful peasant." That naturally roused considerable discontent among the slighted element in the village. Of course if there had been a powerful state organization in existence, feared if not respected by all classes in the village, the attempts at personal

gain at the expense of one's neighbor, would doubtless have been nipped at the earliest period of its manifestation. But there was no such state organization, and none could be launched and intrenched within a short period of time. In every *volost*, in every village, the local Committee was practically sovereign and was, therefore, in a position to exercise unchallenged jurisdiction in the matter of redistribution of land. Under such circumstances it was often easy for the richer peasant to swing a preponderance of advantage to himself.

The poorer peasant, however, did not hesitate to fight against his richer neighbor, when the latter managed to retain for himself an undue proportion of land, and often land that was once divided to the satisfaction of the richer peasant had to be redistributed. To strip the richer peasant of his power in every way, the Bolsheviki introduced the class struggle in the village. They organized so-called pauper's committees that were to combat the well-to-do peasant by means of direct action. This led to such serious disturbances, that the Bolsheviki felt obliged to abandon the class struggle and the pauper's committees, and to allow matters in the village to adjust themselves through the collective effort of the peasants themselves.

The experiences of the Bolsheviki with the peasant are full of significance as to the character of the

peasant and the possible future course of Russian history. They demonstrate that the peasant can neither be flattered nor persuaded nor coerced into adopting plans which he deems inimical to his welfare. He is determined to obey his own understanding of what his problem is, and how it can be solved. He accepts leadership, but follows it only in so far as the aims and methods proposed to him are in his judgment compatible with his best interests. Secondly, the peasant is staunchly opposed to communism. With very few exceptions he insists upon individual proprietorship. The question arises, how can Bolshevism ever become a reality in Russia with the bulk of the people opposed to the basic principle of its philosophy? If Russia is to be a country of small landholders, if the peasant should adhere to his present insistence upon individual ownership of land, if with the aid of modern machinery and modern methods of tillage he should increase the fertility of his soil, grow bigger crops, enjoy greater profits, accumulate property, is he not likely in the future to be even more of a *sobstvennik*, a devotee of private property, than he is now? Furthermore, in a country which is so overwhelmingly agricultural, can communism in industry exist side by side with individualism in agriculture? It is precisely because they do not believe these things possible, that many Russian socialists have been opposed to the Bolshevist program.

CHAPTER XV

THE GIST OF THE PEASANT PROBLEM

WHATEVER the form of the future Russian government, one thing is certain, the landlords will never again get control of the land they have lost. Perhaps in the distant future a new army of big landholders, individuals or syndicates, will spring into existence. That depends upon the ultimate mode of Russia's economic development. The former landed-aristocracy, however, is done away with forever. Their influence and their privileges, like the Czar that protected them, are driven away for all time. Even if a monarchist government or military dictatorship should by chance happen to leap into power for a time, it cannot with the best of intentions, give back to the old aristocracy the land that the Revolution has torn away from them. At best it can offer them a small indemnity. There is only one way in which they can regain their estates, and that is to kill the peasantry, and there are over one hundred million peasants to be killed.

As to the form of land ownership in Russia it is safe to predict that for a long, long time to come it will be on the basis of private proprietorship. Says

V. Karpinsky, a Bolshevist writer, in his review of the working of the Bolshevist agrarian policies during the first year of their operation: "How soon the socialization of land will become universal all over Russia, depends first upon the sentiment of the people of the country with respect to socialization, and secondly on the possibility of the agricultural communes, which are in a minority, to convince the majority of private owners of land, of the practicability and greater profitableness of communistic agricultural labor." In other words, as already intimated in the preceding chapter, only when it can be demonstrated to the complete satisfaction of the peasant, not in argument but in achievement, that he will derive greater personal gain from a communal system of land ownership, only then can it be expected that he will as a matter of sheer self-interest accept agricultural communism. And can any one foretell first, whether such an achievement is possible, and secondly how long a period will have to elapse before it can be made universal in Russia? Until then Russia will remain a country of small landholders.

Of course a certain amount of communism will always prevail among the Russian peasantry, because of certain peculiar conditions that make communism advantageous. Pastures, woodlots, wherever they are scanty, will be owned in common, as has been the case hitherto in a large part of Russia.

Agricultural machinery will be also owned in partnership, for the simple reason that the average peasant is too poor to make an investment in a complete set of necessary farm-tools. And besides, it would not pay him to make such an investment, because the average size of the peasant farm is bound to be small—too small to warrant the possession of full mechanical and technical equipment. Two or three mowing machines, one thrashing machine, one tractor, will suffice for the ordinary village of one hundred inhabitants. The land, too, all of it, will in certain sections be owned in common as formerly, but operated separately. Then through the remarkable spread of the coöperative societies in the Russian village, sale and purchase of grain, produce and machinery will be carried on collectively. In other words, communism will prevail among the peasantry to the extent that the peasant will find it profitable. Self-interest and only self-interest, is the peasant's daily guide in his economic life as much as in his political predilections.

However, the peasant now has the land, not all of it and in places still improperly distributed, but it will remain his ultimately regardless of any political changes that may come. Incidentally it must be pointed out that though the Bolsheviki were the first to legalize the confiscation of the large estates, they hardly deserve the credit for giving the land to

the *mouzhik*. Decree or no decree the land was destined to pass into the hands of the peasant. The peasant was seizing it by force of arms. The Bolsheviki merely legalized, modified and strove to direct a process that had already set in on a large scale. Considering the circumstances that prevailed in Russia no government in the world could have prevented the peasantry from helping themselves to the land. To have tried to suppress the efforts of the peasant in that direction, as Kerensky and his Minister of Interior, Avxentiev, had tried, was like putting one's shoulder to a dam to stop the flood from bursting through.

But the allotment of non-peasant lands to the *mouzhik* cannot solve the Russian agrarian crisis. It is only the first radical step toward its correct solution. The peasant in his ignorance had always imagined, that should he come into control of the *pomieshtchiks* and other estates, which loomed so large to him individually, all his troubles would come to an end. As a matter of fact there is not nearly enough land in Russia to satisfy all peasants. At most there are about fifty million *dessyatins* additional land available for tillage now, and there are about sixteen million peasant families, about three-fourths of whom are either possessed of tiny allotments or are entirely landless. Of course, there are swamps to be drained, forests to be cleared, deserts

to be irrigated—Russia is after all so enormous in size—but it must not be forgotten there are new generations to be taken care of. The annual increment in the peasant population is two million persons, and at best the processes of preparing new land for settlement, cannot any more than make ready sufficient ground for the sustenance of the new generation of farmers.

The final solution of the agrarian crisis in Russia, is in a large measure woven in with the final upbuilding of the general economic organism of the country. Agrarian matters constitute a vital part of this organism, and like any vital part of a living body, its fortunes are inextricably interwoven with the well-being of the entire organism. That this is so can be gleaned from the circumstance, that one of the chief causes of the poignancy of the agrarian crisis in Russia is the fact that Russian industry is so backward, that it can absorb only a very small percentage of the surplus population in the village. Nearly eighty per cent of the people in Russia are engaged in agriculture, entirely too large a number for the amount of available land, though this is enormous. Room has to be provided for the exodus of the surplus "hands" in the village, so as to relieve there the pressure of congestion, and this is entirely dependent upon the process of industrial development in the country.

There are, nevertheless, a number of specific measures that can and must soon be launched in order to retrieve the peasant from his economic misery, and without the adoption of which he never can rise to a substantially higher economic level. Since the amount of available land is too small to enable each family to possess itself of all it can till, it is obvious that efforts must be exerted to bring to the peasant the opportunity of making the most of what he has, and the first thing to be done in that direction is to improve his methods of tillage so as to enlarge his productivity.

One essential requisite to promote productivity is to alter the land arrangements that have been in vogue in the Russian village since days immemorial. The long strip-system involves not only a waste of land in the furrows and ridges that separate one strip from the other, but also a precious waste of time and human as well as animal energy, caused by the necessity to travel from one strip to another. Whether the peasant has a homestead like the American farmer with his land around his buildings, or whether he continues to live in the village with his land lying outside, his allotment should consist of one contiguous field, or at least as nearly contiguous as circumstances shall permit. Then he can move from one field to another, from one crop to another, now with this tool and now with that, without having

to waste precious time and energy. Likewise the three-field system needs to be eliminated, and in its place a proper scientific rotation of crops introduced, so as to enable the peasant to use all the land all the time instead of having a third of it lie fallow every year, as has hitherto been the case.

The greatest need of the peasant, however, is agricultural machinery. He cannot be expected to produce bountiful crops with the lumbering dilapidated implements he has been accustomed to using. In 1910, out of 14.6 million plows, in peasant Russia, 6.5 million were *sokhas*—made partially or wholly of wood—and 0.8 of a million were *kosuli*, and only 7.3 million were real plows, most of them, however, of the light type; and out of 18 million harrows, 5 million were entirely of wood, 12 million of wooden frames and iron pecks, and only one million real drags, but there were scarcely any disks, such as are common on every American farm. It is obvious that with such tools the most intelligent and industrious *mouzhik* cannot hope to derive large yields from the soil. The first essential requisite in good farming is proper plowing and proper dragging—the breaking up of the lumps and the smoothing of the surface so as to make a good seed-bed. Anyone with any experience on an American farm knows with what care and diligence the American farmer prepares his seed-bed. "It is one-half of the crop, my boy," said an old New

York farmer once to the writer in making him drag over a piece of corn-land, which he had thought was fit for planting.

The peasant must dispense with his wooden plows, wooden harrows, his flails and his sowing cribs. He must stop sowing his grain broadcast by hand without covering it up well, so that crows can feed on it and winds and storms play with it. He must drill in his grain, so as to distribute it uniformly over the land, and cover it up beyond the reach of bird and wind. These things he must do, and many others which experience has proven to be indispensable to profitable farming.

Another great need is a system of agricultural schools, experiment stations, agricultural conferences such as all of our agricultural colleges and schools are periodically conducting, and also frequent lectures on various appropriate phases of farming. After all, though a farmer since days immemorial, the peasant knows little of modern methods of tillage. The needed information must be imparted to him in some manner comprehensible to him. An institution similar to that of the county agent so universal in our western states, that is, an expert in a certain locality ready to instruct, encourage and guide him in advanced methods of farming, would be of invaluable aid to the peasant. It is encouraging to note the efforts of the coöperatives in this direction.

To make it possible for the peasant to acquire new implements it will be necessary to extend financial aid to him. A system of long-term credits upon moderate rates, is one of the first requisites. Then the system of taxation under whatever form of government, must be so regulated, as not to press too heavily upon the *mouzhik* as was the case under the old régime. The fact is that the peasant, having become quite conscious of his powers, will never consent to the payment of exorbitant taxes. The experiences of all the governments since the overthrow of the Czar from the Cadets to the Bolsheviki, have demonstrated how reluctant he is to pay a fée to the government. And because of that the problem of taxation is destined to be a delicate issue, and the easiest way to dispose of it, is to abolish insomuch as is possible all indirect taxation and institute a graduated income and inheritance tax. All political parties favor such a tax. This will not only keep the peasant pacified, but will offer him the opportunity to divert his income to necessary agricultural improvements, upon which his future welfare so largely depends.

Another vital matter in connection with the financial position of the peasant is the marketing of his produce, and the first essential in enabling him to receive the most for his goods, is to prevent the recurrence of a preferential tariff treaty, such as Ger-

many wrung out from the Czar in 1904. Russia, as is known, has been a great grain-exporting nation. It is chiefly by means of grain and other raw materials, that she has been able to pay for her imports and to meet the interest on her national loans. During the five years prior to the war Russia exported 24 per cent of her wheat, 37 per cent of her barley, 8 per cent of her oats, and 3 per cent of her rye. A full third of this grain was shipped to Germany, and according to the aforementioned treaty, while German finished products and certain raw materials were received free of duty or at a small tariff in Russia, on Russian grain exported to Germany a heavy custom tax was levied by the German government, namely, 42 kopecks on a *poud* of wheat, 38 kopecks on a *poud* of rye and oats, 23 kopecks on a *poud* of Indian corn and 10 kopecks on a *poud* of barley. The reason for the lower rates on corn and barley was because these grains were indispensable to German stock-raising. With such heavy duties on grain, the chief commodity that the peasant had to sell, it was natural that he should be receiving extremely low prices. Such a system of exchange would surely prove ruinous to the Russian peasantry. Whatever the pressure of outside nations who are more or less in control of the world-market and to whom Russia is greatly indebted financially, and whoever these nations may be, whether England, France or Germany again, it is to

be hoped that no Russian government will ever again allow itself to be intimidated or cajoled into granting trade privileges and concessions such as Germany had enjoyed before the war.

Of course the coöperative societies in Russia, which have had such phenomenal growth in recent years, have already done much and will with the strengthening of their organization do much more to aid the peasant in the purchase of the commodities he needs, and the marketing of the produce he offers for sale. The aim of these coöperatives is to eliminate the middleman and to bring producer and consumer together in all their trade exchanges. In 1913, according to N. P. Makarov, 1672 coöperatives disposed of the grain of their members to mills and foreign buyers at a saving of between 10–15 kopecks a *poud*. According to Morozov the peasant pays annually 23 million roubles in fees to middlemen on eggs alone. Now the coöperatives market their own eggs. The coöperatives aim to do all of their own buying and selling not only of grains but of other products, such as flax, vegetables and fruits.

To facilitate the economic development of the village and the country in general in every possible way, it is surely necessary to improve Russia's transportation system. A country as large as Russia, nearly twice the size of the United States, has only about one-fifth the railroad mileage that America

has. Due to the war, the Revolution and the Allied blockade, it has been difficult to build new railroads even for military purposes, and what is worse, it has been even more difficult to obtain rolling stock so as to maintain those in operation in good condition. From all obtainable reports the Russian railroads are in a woeful condition at present, and, as long as such is the situation, there can, of course, be no rapid economic advance in the country, particularly in the village.

The situation is not much better as far as highways are concerned. In Russia these are atrocious. There are the *chaussée*—paved roads, but they are few and far between. The peasant has neither the knowledge nor the means to build good roads. He usually fills up holes and muddy places with brush and a thick layer of sod. When spring comes, the floods wash off the sod, the roads turn into rivers of slush, and are altogether impassable for weeks at a time. The building of paved highways is one of the most paramount needs of Russia. Then there are canals to be dug. Russia has perhaps the finest navigable river system in the world. Her rivers flow in all directions, north and south and east and west. A network of canals to connect these rivers will materially enlarge transportation facilities.

Thus it is evident that the division of the land is only the beginning of the solution of the Russian

agrarian crisis, which can be solved more or less completely only when Russian industries are largely developed. The specific measures, however, of most pressing immediate importance are those that have to do with the methods of improved tillage, the increase in the productivity of the soil, the profitable disposal of produce and the introduction of new lines and methods of transportation. To the development of these measures Russia must now direct her earnest attention.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT AND THE PEASANT

On the fifth of November, 1865, in an obscure corner of the province of Kostroma, was laid the foundation of the Russian coöperative movement, when a credit associations was formally opened. Though the idea of coöperative enterprise had been advocated before that time by various Russian publicists, notably by Dobrolubov and Chernyshevsky, no attempt had been made to launch the movement, principally because *obshtchestvo*—society, that is the intellectual classes, seemed to manifest no keen interest in the project, and also because the government had looked askance at any ventures of the people into independent social activities. On the sixth of November, 1865, the first consumer's coöperative organization was chartered. During the following forty years, owing to government repression and the difficulty of communicating with the peasantry, the coöperative movement enjoyed but a slow growth. In 1904 there were in all 2000 societies counting 700,000 members. Only after the Revolution of 1905, when the so-called "perelom" came, that is, the break in the attitude

toward the old order and the old ways of thinking and living, when new energies were unleashed and new social forces swam to the surface of Russian life, only then did the coöperative movement receive a mighty impetus, and thousands of new societies leapt into existence all over Russia, both European and Asiatic. On the eve of the world-war in 1914, the number of coöperative organizations had increased to 33,000 and their membership to twelve millions. During the last five years, despite war and revolution, or rather, because of it, the coöperative movement continued its phenomenal growth. In 1918 no less than twenty million householders were affiliated with it, that means about eighty million people were affected in one way or another by its various activities. The following table shows the comparative spread of the coöperative societies in various countries:

	1865	1874	1917
Russia	2	353	39,753
England	800	1,500	12,000
Germany	200	980	10,000
France	1	——	10,000
Japan	1	——	10,000
Italy	2	1,913	9,000
Denmark	——	——	1,574
Sweden	——	——	849
Belgium	——	——	500
Norway	——	——	596
United States	——	——	1,000

That the coöperative movement should meet with such marvelous success in Russia, seems surprising. And yet there is nothing strange in the phenomenon. It is a thoroughly natural outcome of conditions which were particularly favorable to the development of coöperative practice. For one thing the Russians since days immemorial have been given to one form or another of communal enterprise. In the *mir* the peasant learned to coöperate with his neighbors in various undertakings, and in those sections where the *mir* had not struck root, as in Ukraine, he also had occasion to participate in numerous communal projects. In nearly all Russian villages even in those where individual ownership of land prevailed, there were communal pastures, forests, used and cared for by all members collectively; certain communal buildings had to be erected, such as churches, school-houses, communal fences had to be put up, bridges laid, roads mended. In some villages there was the communal granary, to which each member had to donate a certain portion of grain after he had thrashed it, so that there would be a grain fund, from which the destitute villager might borrow rye or oats or wheat for house-use or for seed. In certain other villages there was the flax-house, built also and kept up by the community. There the flax was thrashed and cleaned by all members of the village. Certain other villages operated wind-mills

and blacksmith shops upon a communal basis. Then in building houses or barns or digging wells, the peasants always help each other. In towns, cities and industrial places, were the artels—the voluntary workers' organizations, which undertook to do various jobs, to load or unload boats, clear swamps and forests, dig tunnels, put up buildings or to manufacture certain goods. These artels were for the most part temporary organizations only, though in some places where there was steady employment, they became permanent institutions. In the absence of trade unions it was the artels who prior to the emancipation of the serfs and for several decades afterwards had defended the interests of the factory workers. All these and other similar activities accustomed the peasant and the city worker to the idea of collective effort, and have thus prepared them psychologically for the reception of the principles upon which the coöperative movement is founded.

The chief reason, however, for the success of the movement in Russia is because the economic conditions of the country favored its growth. The peasant was a prey to the *kulack* and the middleman. When he needed a loan, he applied to them, and in a preceding chapter it has already been pointed what exorbitant rates of interest they charged—fifty and an hundred per cent were by no means uncommon—

and how in general they sought to squeeze out of their debtors under one pretext or another various fees and fines. Moreover, if the peasant had to buy something he went to the village shopkeeper, who charged extortionate prices and often did not hesitate to sell goods that were unfit for use. In the cities and towns, likewise, the petty shopkeepers took advantage of the worker and the professional man. Perhaps there was no country in the world where the merchants were given so much to profiteering as in Russia. Consequently, it was natural that a movement should be inaugurated to eliminate this profiteering, a task which the coöperatives had undertaken. Now if Russia had been a highly developed country commercially, with middlemen competing against each other, and numerous and powerful enough to oppose enterprises antagonistic to their interests, the coöperatives would have doubtless encountered stiff opposition in one form or another. But with commerce only inadequately developed, the middleman was helpless in his fight against the coöperatives. When the peasant was informed that he could obtain better goods at a much lower price from a coöperative store, or that he could get cheaper credit at a coöperative bank, he readily responded to the invitation to form such an organization in his village or district.

Another reason which greatly aided the spread of

the coöperatives is their non-partisan attitude toward questions, upon which humanity is divided. Matters of politics, religion, class differences, they have sought to eschew. Anyone with the proper qualifications is admitted to membership, Orthodox or Protestant or Roman Catholic, Cadet, Socialist, Octobrist, they are all welcome. Of course most of the members and most of the societies are in villages, because Russia is essentially a village nation, and the peasant more than any other element has suffered from the backward and abnormal economic state of the country. But there are cooperatives of other classes, too, of officers in the army, and of various civil officials.

Broadly speaking, the coöperatives may be divided upon the basis of their functions into four groups, credit, consumers', agricultural and industrial. Not that each group is entirely distinct from the other. In many ways their activities overlap. Thus the consumers', credit, and agricultural societies often sell and buy the same things. Upon the whole, however, each group seeks to confine itself to the tasks that lie within its own sphere. The consumers' coöperatives buy and sell mainly foods, also wearing apparel, various house furnishings, agricultural implements, books, school-supplies and other commodities that are in constant demand. They always select goods of fine quality and sell at extremely low

prices. Members and non-members may purchase from their stores. The various credit societies operate loan and savings departments. As a rule they charge between eight and twelve per cent interest on advances they make, not an exorbitant rate in Russia, and not much more than sufficient to cover operating expenses. On saving deposits they pay between six and seven per cent, about twice as much as the old government banks had offered. The credit societies also accept orders from members for agricultural machinery and sell this to their customers upon an installment basis. During 1914, all the credit societies in Russia loaned out close to a billion roubles at a tremendous saving to their customers.

The agricultural societies engage in a variety of activities calculated to promote the productive power of both farm and farmer. They operate experiment stations, institute courses of lectures and demonstrations in various phases of farming, and encourage their patrons to introduce new methods of tillage and new crops. They buy and rent agricultural machinery, conduct repair shops, cement, tile and brick factories. These societies are still in their infancy, and on that account have not yet wrought a marked change in Russian agriculture. In view of the fact, however, that Russian farming is destined to undergo a thorough transformation, the agricul-

coöperatives have an unprecedented opportunity to make themselves serviceable to the Russian peasant.

The industrial artels, associations of artisans and factory hands, are especially numerous in the north, where, owing to the poor fertility of the soil, the peasant has always been dependent, more or less, upon income from home industries. These societies buy at wholesale their raw materials, and dispose of their finished products insomuch as is possible directly to the consumer. Their aim is the same as that of the other coöperatives, to eliminate the middleman in all their transactions. The *zemstvos* and the other coöperatives by making loans to them and aiding them in the finding of the proper market, have been largely responsible for their flourishing state at the present time. Prior to the war they were in a rather languishing condition, because they could not compete upon equal terms with factory-made products. But when many of peace-time industries had been diverted into the manufacture of war-supplies, with a resultant shortage of the very commodities the industrial artels were putting out, the market was open for an unlimited amount of their wares. And as the war continued and the industrial machine of the country was breaking down, the demand for their products continued to increase. Later when the Revolution came, and the productive machinery of

the nation was further shattered, they remained practically the only producing agencies, whose working capacity instead of slumping, had actually risen.

In fact the coming of the war, the industrial disintegration of the country and the Revolution, opened wide the road of opportunity to all coöperatives. Working hand in hand with *zemstvos* they took contracts from the government for grain, clothes, shoes, hospital supplies. They had the machinery through which they could reach the millions of peasants and gather from them upon terms that satisfied them and in a manner that stirred their confidence, whatever supplies they could prepare for war purposes. They and the *zemstvos* and the Municipal Council were in fact the only organizations whose war-time transactions had not provoked any adverse criticism either as to competency or square dealing. During the war they continued their fight against profiteers with increased vigor. They formed new societies all over the country, and the people readily responded to their appeal, for only through coöperation could relief be obtained from extortionate middlemen, who strove to corner the market in necessary supplies. They also sought to sustain the morale in the villages by providing proper facilities for the peasantry to keep in touch with the progress of the war and world events

in general. To some extent they aided in the distribution of labor, both industrial and agricultural, by providing means for migration to the places where it was needed most. They likewise administered relief to families whose bread-winners had gone to the army. They favored the enactment of the prohibition law, and when it went into effect they sought to provide healthful recreation in the villages to take the place of the vodka-drinking pastimes. Through all these and other similar activities they continued to grow and intrench themselves in Russian life.

Now not the least remarkable thing about these coöperatives is that the local administrators in the villages are very largely peasants. The movement was started by intellectuals, and the main leadership is still very largely in the hands of highly cultured men. But in the local branches the trustees and the managers are *mouzhiks,* elected by the members of the organization. Not a few of these local leaders are illiterate. But they are men of understanding, of keen business sense, high executive ability, thoroughly trustworthy and industrious. Of course they are aided by trained clerks, bookkeepers, salesmen. In fact, some of the Coöperative Unions have been conducting special schools to train efficient workers for their various enterprises. In Shenyavsky's people's college in Moscow a number of courses have

been offered in the theory and practice of coöperation. The coöperatives have also a press of their own. In 1914, they published thirty journals.

During the past twenty years the various types of coöperatives have been consolidating into central organizations or Unions. Thus there are the Credit Unions, Consumers' Unions, Agricultural Unions, Industrial Unions. The aim of these central organs is to establish mutual control of all the activities of the various separate branches, and thereby eliminate waste of time, work and expense. Though the old government was loathe to sanction the formation of these Unions, for fear they might turn into revolutionary organs, it could not resist the advance of the coöperatives, and finally granted charters for the establishment of the Unions. The Moscow Union of Consumers' Societies is the central nerve of the entire coöperative movement. Founded in 1898, practically a pioneer in the field, with meager resources at its command, under constant suspicion of the government, it struggled along for five years until it began to publish its own journal, "The Union of Consumers," and in 1911, it moved into its own premises—a large building—and extended its operations on such a wide scale, that it began to be considered as the leading coöperative organ of Russia. In 1908 it summoned the first Coöperative Congress, at which 800 delegates were present, and

laid plans for further expansion and centralization. In 1915 its volume of business amounted to 22 million roubles, whereas during the first eight months of the following year the sum was more than doubled. The Moscow Union also began to organize producing agencies, which, aside from the artels, the Russian coöperatives, unlike those in England, had practically ignored. It opened an olive oil establishment, organized a weighing and sorting house for tea and coffee. In 1915 it acquired a confectionery, later it came into possession of a match and tobacco factories, soap works, and founded an extensive plant in Bessarabia for the drying of fruit and vegetables. In 1916 it purchased another confectionery, and organized a system of large-scale flour-milling and a salting herring business in Archangel. All of these enterprises have met with success.

Another institution which tended to cement the coöperatives was the People's Bank in Moscow, the financial center of the coöperative movement. It entered upon its career in a modest apartment. Outsiders, especially financial experts, prophesied its speedy collapse. Instead, it met with instantaneous success. It started with a capitalization of one million roubles, which were obtained through the sale of four thousand shares of stock, eighty-five per cent of which was subscribed for by various credit

societies. In the second year of its existence it put out another issue of shares for a similar amount. At the end of 1916 it had disposed of another block of stock of two million roubles and soon afterwards a fourth issue of six million roubles was prepared. It has thirty-three branches all over Russia, and has established agencies in London and New York.

Its aim is to provide credit for various coöperatives at low rates and in convenient form. It carries on all forms of ordinary banking business, but buys no stocks nor shares, and confines its loan activities entirely to coöperatives. Private individuals or firms cannot obtain credit, excepting in instances when they act as intermediaries between coöperative societies. In addition to extending credit the Moscow Bank has also undertaken to make purchases for the various branches of the coöperative bodies. Being close to the financial market of the world, knowing thoroughly the conditions of the market, it is in a much better position to make purchases than are the isolated societies, who now and then fell into the clutches of the monopolists and their agents. To make the purchasing department of the bank self-supporting, a charge of anywhere between one and three per cent is levied upon the branch organizations. The growth of the Moscow Bank can be gauged from the fact, that while the turnover for the year of 1915 was over twenty-four million roubles,

during the first eight months of the following year it leapt to forty-nine millions, and while the deposits on the first of January, 1915, were about four million roubles, on the same date the following year they were ten millions, and on the first of September, 1916, they mounted to twenty-two millions!

Particularly successful have been the Siberian coöperatives, essentially because the Siberian peasant is, comparatively speaking, in a rather comfortable position. He has more land, averages four cows per household, and has abundant pasture for other stock. The chief coöperatives in Siberia are the butter-making creameries. Originally the Siberian farmers entered into the coöperative manufacture of cheese. In this they failed, mainly because they had no specialist in cheese making and the quality of their goods suffered in consequence. When they turned to making butter, they at once struck the key to success. Agents from many European countries as well as Russia swamped them with orders. At first the private butter-making shops got a lion's share of the business. But by the rapid organization of artels, and central unions, private enterprise was slowly eliminated, until the entire butter-making industry in Siberia has passed practically into the hands of the coöperatives. First organized in 1866 there were in 1900 in Western Siberia, 32 butter-making coöperatives, in 1905 the number increased to 347, in 1910

to 1337 and at present there are over 2000! In 1908 the volume of their business amounted to two and a quarter million roubles and in 1916 to seventy-three million roubles. Says Tugan-Baranovsky: "It may truly be said that our butter making coöperatives constitute the most brilliant page in the history of our coöperative movement."

When the Bolsheviki came into power they attempted to nationalize the coöperatives, to turn their machinery into government agencies, and operate them upon the principle of communism. To the Bolsheviki it appeared that the existence of the coöperatives in Russia in the form in which they carried on their transactions, was favoring the growth of bourgeois tendencies. Though the coöperatives seek to eliminate the middleman, they are based essentially upon the recognition of the principle of private property. In fact their efforts to improve the economic condition of the individual peasant, by enabling him to derive a larger revenue for his produce, and thereby to reap greater profits from his land, only tends to deepen his instinct of private property, and thereby stiffens his resistance to communism. But the efforts at nationalization of the coöperatives failed. Those organizations that had been dissolved have been restored to life, and the leaders that had been under arrest, have been liberated. The Moscow Bank has, indeed, been national-

ized, but though supervised by a Bolshevist Commissary its control has remained virtually with the former leaders of the institution. In fact many new coöperatives have actually sprung into existence during the period of Bolshevist rule. Thus after the regularly established insurance companies had been abolished, the coöperatives founded an Insurance Union, which has not only encountered no opposition from the Bolshevist government but has actually received its encouragement. Likewise Central unions of fruit growers, gardeners and potato planters, have come into existence during the last two years.

Thus we observe that the coöperative movement, because it is rooted essentially in the realities of Russian life and performs a function that is highly useful to its millions of members, has safely weathered the storm of social and economic disintegration. Whatever the future may have in store for Russia, even should a new gust of civil strife sweep through the country and effect a still further shattering of the industrial and political institutions, the coöperatives will continue to function. Abstaining as a body from partisanship in the internal social conflict and holding itself together mainly because of its ministrations to the vital needs of its members, no government and no faction will dare to molest it. Like a rock in the midst of a raging sea it can defy the

destructive forces hovering about, for its rests upon the foundation of solid and unshakable reality. More than any other social organization will the coöperatives contribute toward the rebuilding of the economic institutions of Russia. Especially will the peasant benefit from their aid. They will guide him in the proper pursuance of his daily tasks and will seek to protect him against the tricks and machinations of the middleman, both foreign and domestic.

Incidentally the success of the coöperatives demonstrates how quickly and whole-heartedly the peasant rallies round an organization that seeks directly to improve his economic condition.

CHAPTER XVII

BOLSHEVISM, THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND THE PEASANT

That the American Democracy—the broad masses of the people—have a vital interest in the Russian Revolution, need not be questioned. Even were Russia not so intimately bound up with America's new ventures into international diplomacy and international trade, the sheer human aspects of the Revolution, its suddenness, its stupendousness, its rapid shift from one stage to another, its dramatic climaxes, its effect upon the thought of the world, make an irresistible human appeal. There is furthermore a genuine desire on the part of the American Democracy to help in the happy solution of the momentous problems, which the Russian Revolution has unleashed. There is also, to judge from the written and spoken utterances of representatives of this Democracy, a lurking fondness of the peasant and a profound sympathy for his struggles toward a better life. Only the American Democracy has labored under a maze of misconceptions with regard to the peasant and on that account has been at a loss to appreciate his position in the Revolution and to mold a policy fitting this position.

One thing is absolutely certain, we shall not be prepared to help eradicate those features of the Revolution, which may seem to us undesirable, unless we first gain a correct comprehensive and sympathetic understanding of the forces at play. Now as far as the peasant is concerned, from all that has been said in the preceding pages, certain deductions inevitably force themselves upon our mind—deductions which must constitute the raw material out of which to build a definite steadying and sympathetic policy toward the Russian Revolution.

For one thing the peasant knows what he wants. We should make no mistake about that. He is not a mere juggling ball in the hands of clever leaders, as so many writers would have us believe. A study of the evolution of political parties in Russia bears eloquent testimony to this assertion. Since the earliest days of their existence they have all perceived the importance of the peasant following, and they have all striven to capture it. But it was not so much they who influenced the peasant to change his conception of his needs and problems, as he forcing them to alter their attitude toward him, and only the parties that have come closest to speaking to him in terms of his ideas and demands, have made themselves more or less popular in the village. Misled he has been, pitifully, woefully, again and again, by friend and foe, but whenever he discovered the

divergence between himself and his leaders and patrons, he has striven to the best of his ability and simple understanding, to withdraw his support from them, and whenever possible and feasible even to attack them violently. The bitter disappointment of the older generation of Russian intellectuals, who have always dreamed and yearned for the day when they would lead the peasant to what they regarded as the land of promise for him, and who are now either in exile again in foreign lands, or else buried in seclusion in the libraries and museums and minor offices of their native land, because the peasant despite their multitude of fervent appeals, has rejected their leadership—this in itself is proof that the peasant has a will of his own and is determined to insist upon its fulfillment.

Another conclusion that is evident is that the peasant is actuated solely by self-interest, which, under the present circumstances, means a desire for the enjoyment not of luxuries, but of the commonest and most elementary necessities. He strives after the chance to build up a comfortable home, and to place himself in a position to rear his family in peace and plenty. It is for this reason that the land problem has always been of most momentous importance to him. He could not conceive of a solution of his material crisis without the confiscation and the free distribution of all the big estates.

Still another conclusion that follows from the information presented in the preceding pages, is that the peasant has since the earliest days of serfdom, evinced a marked disposition now and then to battle vehemently in his own way for the attainment of his most cherished aim. The peasant is and has been an actual and potential revolutionary, though on the whole he has not been directly allied with the revolutionary movement of the country, and has on occasions even fought against the movement. True, in the past he seems to have manifested an outward acquiescence in the repressions of the old régime. That was because of external compulsion, which he in his isolation was powerless to resist. He had no mystic affinities for suffering and its amenities, as the rhapsodic Stephen Grahams have so voluminously sought to convince us. One would imagine from the utterances of the apostles of holy Russia and the other apologists of the old régime, that the peasant actually gloried in the experiences of pain, that this was indispensable to his spiritual self-satisfaction. Were this true he should have with all his might defended the former autocracy, for whatever else Czarism may or may not be accused of, its bitterest enemies will gladly concede that it never begrudged affliction to the peasant. And yet somehow there does not seem to be the slightest desire on the part of the *mouzhik* to resurrect the

power of the Czar, the Grand Dukes and the landlords.

The economic self-interest of the peasant and the masses in general, and all that the term implies, is the real and only key to the Russian Revolution. As already explained at considerable length the peasant is not a political theorist. He is not a Bolshevik nor an anti-Bolshevik, not a Menshevik nor an anti-Menshevik, not a Social-Revolutionary, nor an anti-Social-Revolutionary, not a Cadet nor an anti-Cadet. He has no political bias to satisfy and no political traditions to uphold. He cares not which is the party in power, excepting that it is certain that he would never again support a Czaristic or any other form of government, which he might deem inimical to his welfare. It may appear a truism, but it must be emphasized again, that the peasant is first and foremost absorbed in his immediate welfare and the quickest means of insuring it regardless of the nature of this means. Lacking a crystallized political consciousness, lacking political experience, distrustful of authority from above, for centuries in the grind of ruthless poverty, it would be strange, indeed, if he had thought and acted otherwise.

The outside world, however, has exhibited a lamentable and persistent incapacity to appreciate this fundamental fact of the Russian Revolution. The Allied governments especially have approached

the Revolution from the political and not from the economic angle, that is, not from the angle of the immediate cause and province of the Revolution. They have either not attempted or because of their legalistic approach to world problems have not been able to view this epochal event through the eyes of those who have effected it and whom it concerns most vitally. Directly and indirectly they have fostered movements which have promised to erect in Russia a political organism satisfactory and acceptable to them. They have been seeking a political solution of the Russian problem, whereas the Russian masses, particularly the peasant, think and feel and act fundamentally in terms of economic promise and economic gain. A mere glance at the outstanding events of Russian history during the last five years should convince the impartial observer that the Russian problem is essentially economic in nature. It was the breakdown of the economic machinery that brought defeat to the Russian armies, that precipitated the Revolution, that dragged Kerensky to his doom, and that enabled the Bolsheviki by promising to the masses land, bread, peace and control of factories, to gain ascendancy to power.

Consequently it would seem that the greatest contribution the outside world can make to the ultimate social and political redemption of Russia, is

to allow her unhampered opportunity to heal her economic wounds, and to offer all the aid possible to this process of healing. Now the American Democracy which has professed a desire to help rehabilitate Russia, is in a particularly fortunate position to extend the much needed aid to that country. Owing to the marvelous productive powers of American industry, America can supply Russia with necessary equipment for her struggle toward economic rejuvenation more amply than can any other industrial nation. Railroad rolling stock, agricultural machinery, all forms of steam, gas and electrical apparatus, printing presses, school supplies, and many forms of machinery, which are so sadly wanted in Russia, of all these America can ship immense quantities. Furthermore, America has the trained men to help direct the development of Russia's incalculable natural resources, both agricultural and industrial.

But, it is argued, can the American Democracy afford to extend aid to Russia as long as the Bolsheviki remain in power? Is not Bolshevism a direct challenge and menace to American institutions? And if so would not the extension of economic help to Russia infuse new blood and new vitality into the Bolshevist movement, and thereby enhance its menace to existing American institutions? It is chiefly these considerations that have deterred America from proffering the much wanted succor to

Russia, and that may continue to disturb the minds of many patriotic Americans if trade relations are opened with a Bolshevist government.

That Bolshevism is a challenge to American as well as all other existing political and social institutions, the most diplomatic Bolshevik will not have the temerity to deny. The institution of private property the Bolsheviki would annihilate. The right of the franchise they would withhold from those employing hired help and from ministers of the gospel, who are not engaged in some other form of what they regard as socially useful work. The accumulation of wealth through personal effort, ability and thrift they would prevent. In other words, the system of society which they would rear is fundamentally at variance with the one the average American deems most suitable for human existence.

However, a challenge is one thing, a menace is quite another. A challenge becomes a menace only when it cannot be countered. To suspect, therefore, that Bolshevism is a menace to existing American institutions, is to imply that it is either possessed of some occult power to fascinate us into a blind abandonment of our institutions, to our own detriment, or else, that it can actually solve our social problem and bring the greatest amount of good to the largest number of people, more felicitously than can our established order.

Now to imagine that Bolshevism has any of the above occult power is, of course, absurd, and if Bolshevism possesses the virtue to promote human progress more abundantly than American institutions, or than any other institutions anywhere in the world, then it is by no means a menace but a blessing. And if Bolshevism cannot compete with our institutions in ministering to human welfare, if it has in it the power merely to degrade and debase, then none but those afflicted with a grave mental aberration would ever think of championing it, and surely no Anglo-Saxon, or one reared in Anglo-Saxon civilization, and accustomed to appraise ideas in terms of practical values, would ever allow it to supplant the order of society in which he reposes his faith.

Furthermore even in Russia, where the soil has been particularly fertile for its rise, Bolshevism has by no means become definitely and permanently entrenched. Far from it. It is face to face with difficulties which the most sanguine Bolshevik will not declare that it can surmount. There is the individualism of the peasant, who has no patience with the Bolshevist principle of communism, and who stubbornly insists upon individual ownership of land. Then there is the problem of production. Can communism in such an industrially backward country as Russia by denying the reward of personal gain to the talented and energetic, turn out the necessary

amount of supplies for the people? And if so, will it be able to withstand the fierce competition of the highly developed industrial nations, that is, will it be able to produce as cheaply and efficiently as these nations? It may be urged that to compete successfully with foreign producers, the Bolshevist government will initiate a high protective tariff. But would the Russian masses, especially the peasantry, assent to a scheme that would make it necessary for them to pay higher prices for commodities to their own government, than to the foreign seller, which would be the case under a high protective tariff? Of course, if the peasantry were to remain unorganized as under the old régime, they might not be in a position to exert pressure upon their government to abandon a policy injurious to them economically. But the peasantry have organized themselves in local, regional and central bodies, which are bound to gain in influence as time passes, and they will surely oppose innovations inimical to their material advance. Besides, there are the other political parties—the Mensheviki, the Social-Revolutionaries, and even the Cadets, all of whom are opposed rather strenuously to the internal policies of the Bolshevist régime. When Russia is freed from the menace of foreign intervention and counter-revolution, a menace that has tended to paralyze the opposition to the Bolshevist government of all elements

who believe in the Revolution, these parties, particularly the Mensheviki and the Social-Revolutionaries, will resume their active antagonism, which can be neutralized only by compromising with their demands, that is, by sacrificing a serious part of the Bolshevist program.

Can Bolshevism ultimately triumph over these obstacles, or will it wreck itself in the effort to overcome them? It is not within the province of this book to answer this question. It would require a book of itself to make a searching study of it. For the purpose of the present discussion be it sufficient to state, that with Bolshevism existing mainly in an experimental stage, with numerous weighty obstacles barring its path to triumph, with its fundamental philosphy at extreme variance with that of the American Democracy, and with the latter determined to uphold its own institutions and to effect its social advance by means of these institutions in their present or in a desirably modified form—under these circumstances it is hard to conceive how Bolshevism constitutes a menace to American institutions.

Then, too, extending economic aid to Russia does not necessarily mean bolstering the Bolshevist government. It simply means invigorating Russia's economic life, without which there can be no progress or peace in that stricken country. On the contrary, such aid will only put Bolshevism on its

mettle, will subject its theories to the most crucial test, the test of practicability, and if they fail because of intrinsic defectiveness, it will mean an end to Bolshevism forever, and it is far more desirable that Bolshevism should collapse through its own impotence than through outside pressure.

To repeat, the Russian problem is essentially an economic problem. The political crisis can be solved only through the solution of the economic crisis. Outside influences, of course, through persistent pressure and concerted effort, may succeed in imposing upon Russia a certain type of political edifice. But such an edifice can have no long lease of existence, unless those in control of it immediately dispose of the economic crisis to the satisfaction of the masses. Let us not overlook the fact that the masses, the proletariat as well as the peasant, have during the period of the Revolution grown conscious of their power, and have learned to exercise it effectively. Nearly every village and town has been turned to a smaller or larger extent into an armed camp, and the peasant and proletariat will sooner or later surely use their power against an imposed government, if it should not in their judgment comply with their demands for economic reconstruction. If it is argued that what the Allied policy has been seeking is to settle the economic problem of Russia, then obviously it is a waste of wealth and

energy and human life to strive to impose a certain type of state organization as a condition prerequisite to the proper disposition of the economic difficulties. The mere effort at such an imposition not only aggravates the economic crisis, making it more difficult of ultimate solution, but also provokes dangerous irritation within and without Russia. The decision of the Supreme Council to lift the blockade on Russia is a token of the defeat of the original Allied policy toward the Revolution.

"But," it may be argued, "Russia is essentially a peasant country. The peasant is ignorant. He has had scarcely any political experience. Is he capable of self-government? Is it not advisable for outside forces to help guide him politically, until he has learned to govern himself?"

In reply it must be stated that outside political guidance is not in itself objectionable and the peasant is not averse to accepting it, provided it leads him to his chosen goal—economic self-sufficiency. Suggestions, plans, programs, when presented to him in a manner that elicits confidence and in proper form, that is, in terms that he can understand, he follows, provided they coincide with his aspirations. But he manifestly will resist compulsory guidance to the utmost of his ability, whether it comes from within or without Russia. We shall only delay the ultimate political adjustments of Russia, if we should seek to

effect it forcibly under some pretext or other. It cannot be too vigorously emphasized that the Russian state must evolve out of Russian realities, as the Russians themselves understand and interpret them. It must draw its sustenance and strength from its own native soil, if it is at all to endure.

As to the ignorance of the peasant, that is a serious problem. More than anything else does Russia need schools to wipe out her immense illiteracy, and thus to help elevate the peasant to a higher cultural plane. But in his own way the peasant is quite intelligent. Of practical things especially has he displayed a marvelous understanding. And what better proof is needed to substantiate this assertion than the existence of a nation-wide chain of coöperatives of various forms, managed to an appreciable extent by peasants and with such unprecedented success? And were further proof needed one could point to the division of millions of acres of land throughout the length and breadth of Russia during the last two years, in the midst of a mighty Revolution, and with comparatively little bloodshed and disorder. And if the peasant has been capable of building up a wondrous network of coöperatives and to run them successfully, and of carrying out in comparative peace, though still inadequately, the distribution of millions of acres of land, why will he not be able to help erect a stable state organization? It will take time, of

course, and he will commit innumerable errors, but he has had enough experience in social effort to warrant the assumption that he can without the compulsory guidance of insiders or outsiders, grope his way intelligently toward his own political redemption. Moreover, it should be remembered that the peasant is essentially democratic. It is hardly necessary to expatiate on a subject which has been written about so much in Russian and foreign literature. Be it sufficient to point to the fact that only a people at heart democratic could initiate universal suffrage for men and women, as was done in Russia, when the Czar was overthrown.

Those, however, who are skeptical of the capacities of the Russian peasant, and who for some reason or other are disappointed with the Russian Revolution, and nurture dark misgivings as to its future course and ultimate outcome, would do well to ponder over the following words, uttered almost a century ago by Thomas Babington Macaulay:

"The final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, skepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the com-

fortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance, and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort are to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world. There is only one cure for the evils which newly-acquired freedom produces; and the cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell, he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is not to remand him into the dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half-blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend and begin to coalesce, and at last a system of justice and order is educed of the chaos.

"Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition that no people ought to be free, till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into water until he learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery they may, indeed, wait forever."

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